MARIANA

JOSÉ ECHEGARAY

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MARIANA

JOSÉ ECHEGARAY

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PERSONS.

Mariana, 24 years.

Clara, Don Castulo's wife, 30 years.

Trinidad, a widow, Don Pablo's sister, 35 years.

Daniel Montaya, Mariana's lover, 30 years.

Don Pablo, a general, 48 years.

Don Joaquin, an old protector of Mariana, a noble character, 65 years.

Don Castulo, an archæologist and collector of antiques, 56 years, almost, but not quite, a caricature.

Luciano, Clara's lover, 22 years.

Servants.

Time: The Present.

Place: Madrid.

ACT I.

ACT I.

SCENE: *The stage represents a well-furnished hall. Doors in front and on both sides. Evening; brilliantly lighted. A small reception.* CLARA *is seated.* TRINIDAD *comes in at the beginning of the act.*

TRINIDAD (*entering*). I've come to keep you company, Clarita.

CLARA. Did you get tired of listening to the music?

TRINIDAD (*sitting down beside her*). I like music—but only at the opera. As it is very expensive there it must be very good. Only things that cost a great deal are worth anything.

CLARA. That's true. That is the reason why the more sacrifices a man has to make for the sake of a woman, the more he loves her.

TRINIDAD. That is the reason why Daniel loves the charming Mariana so much.

CLARA. And also why the same lovely Mariana is so well beloved by your brother, Don Pablo, our heroic general.

TRINIDAD. I'm not so sure of that.

CLARA. Don't deny it.

TRINIDAD. No, my dear; I don't deny it. But it seems to me that my heroic brother is engaged in a war in which his defeats

will be more numerous than his victories.

CLARA. One victory, marriage, will suffice him. And, besides, Mariana's character is sufficient assurance against the possibility of any real disaster. Moreover, Don Pablo, as a good soldier, would take bloody vengeance for anything of that sort.

TRINIDAD. Their marriage is very unlikely.

CLARA. Why? Common sense dictates it. Mariana is a widow who is scarcely a widow and little more than a child: beautiful as the sun; incalculably wealthy, for half Cuba is hers. She has a stainless reputation and a virtue as pure as marble.

TRINIDAD. Perhaps she is so virtuous just because she is so much like marble. Venus of Milo would resist all the loving assaults of a mail-clad tenor, without so much as a bad thought entering her dainty little head or a single tremor agitating her stony heart.

CLARA. But at any rate, she is virtuous. And as for your brother—your brother is a soldier of noble deeds and untarnished reputation. His forty-eight years are worth more than another's thirty. And he will surely make his way in politics.

TRINIDAD. We agree then that Pablo is heroic and attractive, and Mariana is rich, very handsome and virtuous.

CLARA. Exactly.

TRINIDAD. However—well, our dear Mariana is indeed very virtuous, but she is flirting terribly with Daniel.

CLARA (*laughing*). Do you call that flirting? You ought to say that she is martyring him with slow fire, that she is pitilessly torturing him, that she plays with him as a cat plays with a mouse; she caresses him, she scratches him; she drops him, she pounces on him again; she makes grimaces at him, and then tears him till he bleeds. That's not mere coquetry; it's rather hatred—cruelty. Poor Daniel! If he does not run away, either he will become a madman or he will shoot himself.

TRINIDAD. Those are melodramatic alternatives. On the contrary, either he will be disillusioned in regard to Mariana and marry another woman, or he will marry Mariana.

CLARA. But she hates him, I tell you. Don't you think I know her? When she looks at him she makes eyes as she used to do when she fought with another girl at school and sprang at her to bite her and scratch her. Believe me, if social usage would tolerate it, she would bite and scratch Daniel.

TRINIDAD. Clarita, that is very dangerous.

CLARA. For Daniel.

TRINIDAD. No, my dear, for Mariana.

Listen, I'll tell you confidentially the first feeling I had toward my poor old husband —may he rest in peace—was an overwhelming desire to bite his hands. His hands were so white and well kept, you know. (*Wipes her eyes.*)

CLARA (*laughing*). That's indeed strange. Before I married him I never felt any desire to bite my dear Castulo. After marriage—very often.

TRINIDAD. But if Mariana hates Daniel, as you say, why does she receive him at her house? Why does she treat him as a friend and make herself as attractive as possible to him?

CLARA. I don't know. Maybe she enjoys torturing him. Mariana is very good, but she is rather—how shall I say?—rather cruel.

TRINIDAD. That's certain. Mariana is very good, but at bottom—God only knows what Mariana is. (*Mysteriously.*)

CLARA. Don't you know—she is an egoist?

TRINIDAD. She is very cold, I know.

CLARA. No, heartless.

TRINIDAD. She does not love anybody.

CLARA. She has no feelings; really, no feelings.

TRINIDAD. And she doesn't believe in anybody or anything.

CLARA. But, in spite of all, she is very

good.

(DON JOAQUIN *enters.*)

TRINIDAD. Yes, indeed, and I love her very much.

CLARA. And she is so pretty!

TRINIDAD. Very pretty.

CLARA. Don Joaquin—

JOAQUIN. I'll wager you are speaking well of a friend.

TRINIDAD. That's right.

JOAQUIN. Did I guess right? I could see it on your faces. You had panegyrics written on your faces, as Don Castulo would say.

CLARA. Exactly. We are talking of—

JOAQUIN. About the hostess?

TRINIDAD. Yes, about Mariana.

JOAQUIN. How much did you leave to be said in order to make her out a perfect goddess? (*Aside.*) To tear her to pieces.

CLARA. Very little.

JOAQUIN. I'll help you finish the undertaking. Let us make Mariana a goddess.

TRINIDAD. You love her very much.

CLARA. You always loved her.

TRINIDAD. You have been almost a father to her.

JOAQUIN. You exaggerate. However, I am greatly interested in her. And at my age a man may take an interest in a young lady such as Mariana without having to fear that he will cause any gossip. At

least, I think so—I am not quite sure about it.

CLARA. No, I dare say you are not. (*Laughing.*)

TRINIDAD. No—you are still dangerous. (*Laughing.*)

CLARA. Really dangerous at times. (*Laughing again.*)

JOAQUIN. Is that so? You will make me conceited. I am going to ask Don Pablo's permission to make love to you, Trinidad. I'm going to solicit a license from Don Castulo, our foremost archæologist, to give you a practical course in archæology, Clarita.

CLARA. Put flirting aside and let us return to Mariana.

JOAQUIN. Were we not through with her?

CLARA. Not yet; there are a lot of things left to say about the charming little widow.

TRINIDAD. A widow! But she is scarcely a widow. She marries, or her father marries her by proxy to a wealthy Cuban; he ships her to him by the first steamer; she lands and finds her husband has just died. Tell me, do you call that being a widow? (*To Don Joaquin.*)

JOAQUIN. Well, we'll call her a widow by proxy. You are not that kind of a widow, are you, Trinidad?

TRINIDAD. Oh, no!—my poor Paco!

JOAQUIN. Nor you, Clarita?

CLARA. I? Goodness, don't you remember Castulo?

JOAQUIN. True. What a memory I have! Castulo, priest of the great and noble science, archæology! And, see, here he comes in answer to our invocation.

CLARA. And Luciano with him. Poor boy!

JOAQUIN. The poor boy is casting imploring looks at you to save him, Clarita.

CLARA. Never mind, Castulo is initiating him into the sacred mysteries of archæology.

JOAQUIN. Throw him a life line or he will drown in a sea of archæological definitions. (*To Clara.*)

CLARA. But if I do Castulo will come trailing after him.

(*All talk in low tones and laugh. Clara, Trinidad and Joaquin form a group on the left. Don Castulo and Luciano come slowly from the parlor and place themselves on the right. Don Castulo explains earnestly. Luciano listens courteously, but keeps his eyes fastened upon Clara.*)

CASTULO. Don't doubt it! Luciano, there is nothing so interesting, so instructive, and I may even say so profound, as the history of that article, however prosaic in appearance it may be. Oh! the history of the comb, from the earliest times, from

the cave of the prehistoric bear and hyena and long-haired elephant down to our day —it is the history of humanity! Do you doubt it?

LUCIANO. I don't doubt it. But I see your wife over there—

CASTULO (*holding him*). Don't believe it on *my* word. We archæologists are so conceited. But I have a collection of combs! Ah!

LUCIANO. I think Clara is calling me.

CASTULO. No, she is not calling you. You will see her tomorrow and you will have a good time with—

LUCIANO (*interrupting*). With whom?

CASTULO. With this matchless collection.

LUCIANO. Oh, the collection of combs.

CASTULO. The British Museum offered me twenty thousand dollars for it.

LUCIANO. And you didn't sell it?

CASTULO. I will never sell it. I have fish bone combs, porcupine combs, wood combs, bone combs, glass combs and combs made of different metals.

LUCIANO. Wonderful!

CASTULO. It's easy to understand. Where there is a tooth of any kind, there are many teeth, and if there are many teeth put together you have a comb.

LUCIANO. Quite so. I think—oh, yes, I think— (*He tries to go toward Clara, but Castulo prevents him.*)

CASTULO. You will take lunch with us tomorrow and you will see wonders. I have got combs of every age and every form—straight, curved, triangular, polygonal, representative, not representative, plain, carved, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and composite. I have got them from Egypt, from Assyria, from Greece, from Rome—*there* were real combs for you! I have combs broken by the Barbarians, those people who preferred thistles to combs for hairdressing. I have a comb that is said to have belonged to Charlemagne. I have even a comb that is believed to have been used by Joan of Arc—who knows? We must be very careful about combs.

LUCIANO. Yes, Clarita, I am coming. (*Clarita has not called him at all.*) Excuse me, Don Castulo, your wife is calling me. (*Don Castulo is so enthusiastic about his own speech that he fails to detain him, and Luciano goes to Clara.*)

CASTULO. How inconsiderate women are! (*Aside.*) Luciano was delighted, and you—(*Approaching the group.*)

TRINIDAD. I beg your pardon. (*To Don Castulo.*)

CASTULO. Oh, it's nothing. Leave them alone. (*Taking her to the right.*)

TRINIDAD. You are tired of playing billiards?

CASTULO. I never play billiards. It is

an insipid game. To hit a ball and make it roll! Do you think that ivory, that noble substance, so pure, so classic, with all the softness and daintiness of a feminine touch and all the mighty energies of manly effort; do you think, I repeat, that ivory was created to be moulded into balls and to suffer the insult of being knocked about by idle good-for-nothings? Why, if elephants knew of that they would raise their trunks toward heaven and cry for vengeance! With ivory you can make artistic statuettes —then you can make combs, for instance, to caress some beautiful woman's golden hair—anything but billiard balls. I have in my collection—

TRINIDAD. Excuse me, I must look for my brother.

CASTULO. I'll take you to him. (*He is about to accompany her.*)

TRINIDAD. Much obliged, but Don Joaquin is calling you. Don Joaquin! (*Calling him.*)

CASTULO. Me? Don Joaquin! (*Turning to Joaquin.*)

JOAQUIN (*approaching him*). Did you call me?

CASTULO. I? No; but it's all the same. (*He buttonholes him.*)

TRINIDAD (*is standing by Clara and Luciano and has been speaking to them during the preceding conversation*). Well,

good-by.

CLARA. Are you going for good?

TRINIDAD. No, I'll come back as soon as there is no more danger. (*Pointing to Don Castulo.*)

(*Clara and Luciano at right, talking in low tones; Don Castulo and Don Joaquin at left.*)

CASTULO. How nervous women are! They can't be quiet for five minutes, or put their attention on anything for two minutes, or listen for a single minute.

JOAQUIN. You say they can't listen! But that's not always the case. (*He glances furtively at Clara, who is listening with a keen interest to Luciano as he talks in an earnest manner to her.*)

CASTULO. Oh, they listen if you talk to them about the latest fashions. But talk to them about serious subjects—my collections, for instance—

JOAQUIN (*frightened*). Oh, yes—I know—your collections.

CASTULO. Now, you would listen to me for hours—

JOAQUIN. Are you sure?

CASTULO. Well, you listened to me for three hours yesterday, and you listened to me breathlessly. Why, Trinidad didn't want to listen for a moment.

JOAQUIN. What? She didn't? That's not possible! Do you hear that? Do you

hear that? (*With exaggerated gestures of astonishment he approaches Clara and Luciano, interrupting their conversation and thus escaping from Don Castulo.*)

CLARA. What did you say, Don Joaquin?

JOAQUIN. I said that Trinidad does not enjoy archæology. Am I right, Don Castulo?

LUCIANO. Is that so?

CASTULO (*to Luciano*). It's true. Ah, everybody is not like you. (*To Clara.*) I remember now I have begged Luciano to take luncheon with us tomorrow. I want to show him some recent acquisitions. I have found a piece of Genoese crockery of the 17th century that you will be crazy about.

LUCIANO. I believe it. Your house contains real treasures, Clarita.

CASTULO. You may well say so.

LUCIANO. How much I envy you them, Don Castulo.

CASTULO. I guess so! (*Laughing.*) But they are mine. I have increased the Amenhotep I, Amenhotep II and Amenhotep III Egyptian galleries. You didn't know that.

LUCIANO (*to Clara.*) Don't you remember?—Trinidad is waiting for you.

CLARA. That's so. (*Rising.*) She is waiting for the bridge party. (*To her husband.*)

LUCIANO. You'll excuse us, Don Castulo. (*To Clara.*) Are we going?

CLARA. Yes.

CASTULO. Does she positively expect you?

CLARA. Positively. (*She leaves with Luciano.*)

JOAQUIN. Me, also. (*He tries to go.*)

CASTULO (*taking him by the arm*). No, not you. They are four already—Pablo, Trinidad, Clarita and Luciano. You are out of it.

JOAQUIN. I am always counted out.

CASTULO. You are never counted out with me. I was telling you that my Egyptian collection is simply wonderful. I have got about twenty hybrid statuettes—that's what we call them. When Luciano saw them I thought he would die of envy. I have the bird-man, the winged horse, the ox-man—why, he looks a good deal like you.

JOAQUIN. You flatter me. Much obliged.

CASTULO. Don't thank me; thank the Pharaonicartist. And as for Assyria, what would you say to my collection of the beards of Adramelech and Tarasar? Then my collection of the curling irons that belonged to Assurbanipal's wife? Just for fun I curl Clarita's puffs with them, sometimes.

JOAQUIN. Those are indeed archæological and refined pleasures.

CASTULO. And pleasures that you can-

not even imagine. (*Excited.*) Time goes on, races of men mingle with one another, but I live among men of the past. I know them in their most intimate relationship; I feel as a friend to them. I can wipe away my perspiration with the same cloth which dried the forehead of Fidia; I can put my feet into a pair of golden slippers in which a Moorish king used to walk on his battle-fields. Oh, grandeur of history! Oh, little things of daily life! You are all at my disposal, ordered and classified! I have got something great —

JOAQUIN. You have everything.

CASTULO. I'll tell you.

JOAQUIN. Not now. Look, Mariana and Daniel are coming.

CASTULO. Well—

JOAQUIN. We must leave them alone to prepare the archæology of the future.

CASTULO. You're right.

JOAQUIN. Then, good-by.

CASTULO. I'm going with you. It's so pleasant to be in the company of a man of genuine culture. (*They leave by right.*)

JOAQUIN. Nebuchadnezzar! (*With an accent of despair.*)

CASTULO. I have something of Nebuchadnezzar's, too.

JOAQUIN. Something? Oh, I am sure you have a great many things.

(*Mariana and Daniel come in at left.*)

(*Mariana laughs as she follows Don Castulo and Don Joaquin with her eyes.*)

DANIEL. You have become very merry suddenly, Mariana. What are you laughing at? Really, this laugh—

MARIANA. Don't worry, Daniel. I'm not laughing at you; I'm laughing at them—at Don Joaquin especially.

DANIEL. At Don Joaquin?

MARIANA. Yes, at my good friend, my respectful protector, Don Joaquin, at my dear Don Joaquin.

DANIEL. Why?

MARIANA. Don't you see that Don Castulo has got hold of him? (*Laughing.*) He is in the power of Don Castulo, who will explain to him—who knows what he will explain to him? Don Joaquin is doomed to go insane today.

DANIEL. And you enjoy watching the torture of the dear old man who loves you so much?

MARIANA. I don't enjoy it; I laugh at it. That's a very different thing.

DANIEL. If that's the way you treat your friends, how do you treat your enemies?

MARIANA. The same way. I don't find much difference between the two. Friend —enemy—all depends, as Don Castulo would say, on the moment of time that you consider. You are my friend today; you will be my enemy tomorrow.

DANIEL. Never.

MARIANA. That is the most useless word in the dictionary. Be kind, Daniel, and don't bother me tonight with any of your romantic ideas, which, by the way, are no longer in fashion. Let me laugh without malice at my beloved Don Joaquin being triumphantly dragged through my parlors by Don Castulo, just as an ancient conqueror would drag behind his chariot the king whom he had defeated in battle.

DANIEL. Ah, Mariana, Don Castulo is not the only one who drags through your parlors poor slaves chained to a triumphal chariot.

MARIANA. Is there any one else who is guilty of such inhuman conduct?

DANIEL. I think so.

MARIANA. And that despot is I?

DANIEL. You—and you know it.

MARIANA. Well, I don't want to be inhuman or despotic or cruel; I don't want to carry slaves about with me as attendants, so I break their chains and set them free. (*She rises as if to go.*)

DANIEL. No, please, Mariana, don't go. The chain can't be broken, for, even if you broke it, the slave would still follow you to the end of the world—to the end of life!

MARIANA. Those exaggerations irritate me. Besides, we are laying ourselves open to ridicule—you and I.

DANIEL. Do you want me to speak seriously?

MARIANA. To speak seriously? That would be genuine cruelty. However, speak seriously, if you want to. (*She sits down.*)

DANIEL. Mariana, do you love me or do you hate me? I don't know. Tell me the truth.

MARIANA. And if I say I love you, then you will love me, I suppose, and if I say I hate you, then you will hate me. (*Laughing.*)

DANIEL. Whether you love me or not, I am always yours, for life and for death.

MARIANA. What a profound passion!

DANIEL. Don't sneer.

MARIANA. I'm not sneering.

DANIEL. Then answer me frankly, is it hatred—or love?

MARIANA (*approaching him and looking at him with mingled coquetry and tenderness*). And suppose I don't know myself?

(*A pause. They look at each other in silence for a few minutes.*)

DANIEL. Yes, it may be that you don't know.

MARIANA. I am very sincere.

DANIEL. But why should you hate me? (*With great tenderness.*) I worship you as I would worship an angel; I think of you day and night with a love that is infinite. If by chance you call me "Daniel"

all my being thrills at the sound as a man is thrilled when he hears in his soul the voice of his God. Is this a cause for hatred? Then what is the cause?

MARIANA (*listening to him, rather pleased*). There is none. That is the interesting part of it. A hate with a cause is a melodramatic hate, but a causeless hate is a very refined, æsthetic hate, worthy of you and me, for we are people of good taste, you know.

DANIEL. So you hate me?

MARIANA. What can I do if you insist upon it?

DANIEL. Mariana, Mariana, why do you enjoy torturing me?

MARIANA. How should I know why? Come, let us talk together about it. We'll begin at the beginning. The day we met I didn't know who you were.

DANIEL. Nor I you.

MARIANA. Chance brought us together.

DANIEL. Just chance. I was walking down the street one day, holding my father's arm, because he was very ill—

MARIANA. How is he now? Does he suffer much?

DANIEL. Very much, Mariana.

MARIANA. Poor man! Some day we'll drive over to see him. His country house is only a few miles from Madrid, isn't it?

DANIEL. Yes. And how grateful he

would be to you.

MARIANA. Go on. You were walking with your father and he was so completely wrapped in his furs that I couldn't see him at all. But I saw *you.* (*Laughing.*)

DANIEL. And I saw you—for the first time.

MARIANA. The first! When shall you see me for the last time, I wonder? Ah, if we could penetrate into the secrets of the future! (*Thoughtfully.*)

DANIEL. Would you wish it to be soon?

MARIANA. No, frankly, I should not. How sad it would be never to see you! (*Tenderly.*)

DANIEL. Mariana!

MARIANA. How sad and lonely life is without another person to—

DANIEL. To love?

MARIANA. How conceited you are! I didn't say that.

DANIEL. Then you mean—to torment!

MARIANA. To torment or to love—it's the same thing.

DANIEL. Well, I accept the torment for the sake of the love.

MARIANA. For the present the former will suffice.

DANIEL. How cruel you are!

MARIANA. Go on, go on with your description of our romantic meeting. You, walking with your old father and I in an

open carriage waiting in front of a store, wasn't that it?

DANIEL. And I looking at you and thinking, "How happy I should be if that woman would speak one word to me, one single word! Just to hear her voice!"

MARIANA. You must have grown very happy since that day, for we have spoken a great deal together.

DANIEL. I am—very happy.

MARIANA. And what else happened? I don't remember anything else.

DANIEL. Yes, something else! A poor girl, half naked, with the agony of hunger upon her face, begged alms of you.

MARIANA. I remember. Poor, abandoned girls! (*She remains sad and thoughtful.*)

DANIEL. You looked at her with pity, with sympathy, even with affection, and your beautiful eyes grew dim with tears. You gave her a coin and told her your address. I heard distinctly, and I thought, "She is very good."

MARIANA (*sneering*). The proof was doubtless conclusive.

DANIEL. You raised your eyes and fastened them upon me and your face had changed. Your first look had been as a sunbeam striking on a rain drop and making it glisten, a miniature rainbow. Your second look was like that same sunbeam,

turning aside and striking on a great black cloud and becoming there a dull, somber reflection of its former glory. "That woman is very bad," I thought unwillingly.

MARIANA. Of course. You had been impertinent and I couldn't disguise my displeasure. You called the girl and gave her money, as if you would say: "I also, *we both* will help this poor creature, Senora. Now there is a tie binding us to one another." That was what you thought, and I—I thought: "How impertinent that young man is! How impertinent, and yet —how interesting!"

DANIEL. Mariana!

MARIANA. Are you going to complain that I called you interesting? A little more and I shall find you attractive. (*Laughs.*)

DANIEL. I'll be whatever you want. Let me finish my story. I made inquiries in regard to you and learned that you were the daughter of a rich banker who had died at Brussels. I found someone to introduce me at your home.

MARIANA. And I received you cordially, didn't I?

DANIEL. Yes.

MARIANA. And since then you can't say I have treated you badly. I allow you to speak to me of your affection for me; I allow you to accompany me everywhere. I'm almost compromising my good name

for your sake.

DANIEL. No, that's not so, Mariana. To beg you on my knees, if necessary, to be my wife—that is not to compromise your good name.

MARIANA. Your wife! (*Laughing.*) The very idea!

DANIEL. Why not? You are rich, that's true—

MARIANA. Who cares about that?

DANIEL. But I am also rich, even if not so rich as you. You are young and beautiful.

MARIANA (*joking*). You are not an old man, and—well, I told you before what I won't repeat now.

DANIEL. Your social position is a high one. My father's also was one to be envied. Do you intend to mount higher? Very well, I'll mount higher for you. I give myself up to you entirely, unconditionally. My life, my happiness, my soul, my honor, every thought of my brain, every beat of my heart, to the last drop of my blood—all, all are yours! I'll be a father to you, a slave, a lover—what you will! If you say to me, "Adore me," I shall bow down before you till my forehead touches the stones at your feet. If you say to me, "Jester, amuse me," I shall make you merry with my quips. Whisper to me, "That man there annoys me," and I will

kill him on the spot and become a murderer for your sake. Say to me, "Love me," and on that day, if you have no soul, I will die in your arms, and, if you have a soul, you shall die in mine.

MARIANA. Not so violent, Daniel. We are not playing a comedy. And, do you know, if all that is true, you love me a great deal. (*Looking at him nearby with curiosity, interest and sympathy.*) But don't you know that those things have been said many times before in this world and that almost always they have been lies?

DANIEL. They are not lies when I say them, Mariana.

MARIANA. Listen to me. Falsehood or truth, you have said all that with so much fire, with so much earnestness, that for the moment I believe it. Don't interrupt me. Tonight I want us both to be in good spirits —to be happy, happy for the moment. Tomorrow—God knows what tomorrow may bring! (*Restraining him again.*) Don't interrupt me. What you said to me reached my soul. I am a woman in spite of all, and we women are so easily deceived. I also feel the necessity of loving. Don't you believe it? I also am moved by the affection of others. And for two people to love one another very much—that must be a great happiness. To think that a good-hearted, brave, generous and talented

man is just dying for one's love! It is a wonderful thought! "I can make him laugh, I can make him cry!" That flatters one's vanity. To hold the heart of a man as strong and as noble as you are in one's hands and to say: "In these hands, so little and so weak, I hold a man's heart; and, if I press, his heart is suffocated, and, if I caress it, it beats madly for joy. And nobody on earth is able to do with this man's happiness what I can." That, believe me, Daniel, that makes me proud. Seeing in you so much love, so much self-sacrifice, seeing you subject your very existence to my poor woman's will, I am tempted to repay your love with another love as great—no greater. Go on, go on; a day will come when I shall not be able to restrain myself, and, mad with passion, I shall say to you, "Daniel, Daniel, I love you with all my soul!" (*There is truth in this tirade. She really feels what she is saying, but at times she tries to speak in a spirit of fun, especially at the beginning.*)

DANIEL. But do you really feel what you are saying? I can't believe it. Is it the truth? (*With a movement of joy.*)

MARIANA (*returning to her coquetry and restraining his enthusiasm*). Just a provisional truth, a hypothetical truth, just for tonight, while these emotions last. When they are over I don't know what I shall

think or say.

DANIEL. I think you do want to drive me insane.

MARIANA. Good heavens! You are never satisfied. I was so gay—I have not been so gay in a long while. I quite fancied I was a mischievous girl again, and I had such schemes—mere nonsense, of course. But I associated you with my schemes, with my nonsense. (*In tones of mingled tenderness and playful pleading.*)

DANIEL. Do you mean it, Mariana? Ah, let us have the nonsense by all means.

MARIANA. No, not now. You have made me quite sad. (*Feigning childish sorrow.*)

DANIEL. Forgive me—forget my impertinence. Please tell me what your scheme is.

MARIANA (*mysteriously*). It was a scheme for tonight.

DANIEL. I can't guess what.

MARIANA. Night is the great accomplice of all foolishness. The sunlight is wise and dignified. The evening shades are mischievous. And I—shall I tell you?

DANIEL. Of course.

MARIANA. Tonight they are going to give a great fancy ball at the opera house—a charity ball—and I thought—a domino, a mask, and Daniel's arm conducting me to my box.

DANIEL. We two—alone together?

MARIANA (*correcting his impertinence by ignoring it*). With Clarita and Trinidad. I have spoken to them about it already, and, in short, everything is arranged.

DANIEL (*doubtfully*). And who else is going?

MARIANA. Luciano will take Clarita. Don Castulo (*laughs*) will solemnly escort Trinidad, and I—well, I told you who was to take me—that is, of course, on condition that you want to.

DANIEL. Nobody else is going?

MARIANA. We didn't think of anybody else.

DANIEL. So, Don Pablo?

MARIANA. I didn't consider Don Pablo—except in case of your refusing.

DANIEL. How cruel you are—no, how good! An angel! The angels must be like you.

MARIANA. Do angels go to fancy dress balls in dominos and masks? I didn't know that. (*Laughing.*)

DANIEL. Yes, Senora, they do—and on Daniel's arm.

MARIANA. How naughty of them!

DANIEL. Well, let's go by all means. But it's very late, Mariana.

MARIANA. Oh, we have plenty of time; we have a lot of things to arrange yet first. For instance, my cavalier ought to have an emblem. How would this flower do?

(*Takes off the one she is wearing on her breast.*)

DANIEL. With this flower— (*He takes it eagerly and tries to put it into his buttonhole, but does not succeed.*)

MARIANA. Yes, I know. With this flower you will climb to heaven or you will go down into the depths of the earth. You will accomplish wonderful deeds. But what you will never do is to get that flower into your buttonhole—that is, unless I help you.

DANIEL. Will you?

MARIANA. What? Help my cavalier? Why not? That is a lady's duty. And besides in this case it's an act of pity.

DANIEL. Pity, Mariana!

MARIANA. I think I have a great deal of pity.

DANIEL. It's not securely fastened yet. It might fall off. (*In order to keep her near him.*) I'm afraid I shall lose it.

MARIANA. No, it's quite secure. And now be sensible; Don Pablo is coming.

DANIEL. The devil take Don Pablo! What right have these soldiers in society? They were meant for war—for the battlefield—to die gloriously for their country, not to distract my Mariana's attention.

PABLO (*to Mariana*). May I join you?

MARIANA. Certainly. I am delighted to see you. Come, sit down here by my side.

(They sit. Daniel remains standing.)

PABLO. Do you really find my conversation agreeable?

MARIANA. Why, general, you know I do.

PABLO. I can't make gallant speeches.

MARIANA. True affection does not dwell only on the lips.

PABLO. It is in the heart.

DANIEL. Yes, and when the affection is not very great it remains in the heart. When it is too great for the heart, it overflows at the lips.

MARIANA. Not always, Daniel, it depends on the size of the heart. If the heart is small, the affection overflows very easily.

PABLO. Well answered.

MARIANA *(to Don Pablo)*. You say, "Well answered" because it was in your defense.

PABLO. Thank you, Mariana.

DANIEL. I didn't think that most generals needed to be defended.

PABLO. Here I need and accept Mariana's defense. Outside, I always defend myself to the best of my ability.

MARIANA. Very well said.

DANIEL *(with impetuousness)*. But I say—

MARIANA. You don't say anything at all. You confess yourself vanquished. For you were vanquished and on your own ground.

PABLO. If *you* declare me the victor, I

have indeed won a great victory.

DANIEL. If you declare me vanquished, I have indeed suffered a great defeat.

MARIANA. But the victor should receive a trophy. *(Looking in her gown for the flower she gave Daniel.)* I thought I had a flower—

DANIEL. Here it is, Mariana.

MARIANA. That's so; I had forgotten. I'll select this one for the general. *(She goes to a bouquet and selects a flower.)* Take this, general.

PABLO. Mariana! *(He tries to put the flower on, but is not very successful.)*

DANIEL *(aside.)* Ah, she does not help him!

MARIANA. Can't you do it, general?

PABLO. I'm very unskilful.

DANIEL *(hardly conscious of what he is saying, his one idea to prevent Mariana from helping Don Pablo, approaches the latter to assist him.)* If you can't, I'll help you.

PABLO *(looking at him in surprise).* Much obliged; I can do it.

MARIANA. What an idea! *(Aside to Daniel.)* Only a lover could make himself so ridiculous.

DANIEL *(aside to Mariana).* Before I let you help him with that flower, I'll put my sword through his heart.

MARIANA. High tragedy!

PABLO. At last!

DANIEL *(sneering)*. A new victory for the general. It took a long time, but he conquered—and without Mariana's help.

PABLO. The most enjoyable victories are those that cost the most effort to win.

DANIEL. That is, if they don't cost you your life.

PABLO. Well, a defeat is more likely to cost you your life.

DANIEL. Not always. I was defeated before, according to Mariana, and I am still very much alive.

PABLO. Skirmishes are not always very bloody affairs.

MARIANA. But, general, you must not risk your valuable life in useless skirmishes, but in great battles. And the skirmish is ended now, anyway. *(Don Pablo and Daniel bow respectfully and remain silent.)* General, will you escort me to Trinidad? I want to speak to her.

PABLO. Senora.

DANIEL. And I—must I wait? You know —in regard to—

MARIANA. Oh, yes, that's so. How absent-minded I am tonight. Yes, wait for me, Daniel. I'll come back at once. We have a plan, general, that you don't know anything about.

DANIEL *(imploringly)*. Remember, it's a secret, Mariana.

MARIANA. But we'll tell you.

DANIEL. But—

MARIANA. We'll tell you about it tomorrow. *(Mariana and the general leave.)*

(Don Joaquin comes in hurriedly, with the air of one who is running away from an enemy; he is continually looking back to see if Don Castulo is pursuing him.)

DANIEL. That woman will drive me insane.

JOAQUIN. You say that *woman* will drive you insane?

DANIEL. Yes.

JOAQUIN. Well, that man has already driven me insane.

DANIEL. Who?

JOAQUIN. Don Castulo. My head is numb with all these Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans and barbarians—especially barbarians. Oh, these Pharaonic mummies and Carlovingian reliques! Oh, by the way, I have a letter for you. I think it's very urgent— (*Showing a letter.*)

DANIEL. A letter?

JOAQUIN. For you. It was just sent around from your apartment, where a servant of your father's had delivered it.

DANIEL. Of my father's! (*Taking the letter eagerly.)*

JOAQUIN. He came in a carriage about fifteen minutes ago. He had orders to look for you everywhere till he should find you

and then drive you at once to the country house.

DANIEL *(reading)*. Good God!

JOAQUIN. What's the matter? Is your father ill?

DANIEL. Just what I was afraid of—another attack near. My sister is terribly alarmed. They want me at once.

JOAQUIN. Don't get needlessly alarmed. Maybe the attack won't come after all, or your father will get over it, as he did the last time.

DANIEL. Who knows? Anyhow, I must leave without a moment's delay. Poor father!

JOAQUIN. Then I'll take you to the carriage.

DANIEL. Yes, come on. *(Stepping.)* But first I want to let Mariana know. Mariana! Oh, what an unfortunate coincidence!

(Mariana comes by a side door clad in a domino and with a mask in her hand. She is in gay spirits.)

MARIANA. I'm here, Daniel; I didn't forget my engagement. Trinidad, Clarita, Don Castulo and Luciano are coming. But you can't go. *(To Don Joaquin.)* Nor Don Pablo. Serious people stay here and play bridge.

DANIEL. Mariana!

MARIANA. What a melancholy countenance! Are you angry? Don Joaquin,

Daniel is angry and I know why. He fancies I have been too friendly with Don Pablo. Poor Daniel!

DANIEL. Mariana!

JOAQUIN. This is reconciliation number three hundred and sixty-five, and they've known each other just a year.

MARIANA *(looking at Daniel for a few minutes. She approaches him and says in a somewhat aggrieved tone)*: Don't be jealous. If I ever fall in love—and I'm not sure that I shall—but, if I do, why I shall belong body and soul to one man—and I know who that one man is.

DANIEL *(earnestly)*. Who?

MARIANA *(after a pause, during which they look steadily at one another.)* Let us go to the ball—and I'll tell you there.

DANIEL *(desperately)*. I can't.

MARIANA *(disappointed)*. I don't understand.

DANIEL. I have just received this letter. My father is ill. I have to leave right away for his country place. I waited only to tell you. Forgive me, Mariana!

MARIANA. I'm very sorry. Of course, you can't accompany me.

DANIEL. Perhaps my father is already dead. And yet it is hard for me to go from you tonight.

MARIANA. No, Daniel; your father must come first. Is he very ill?

DANIEL. They write me that they fear another attack is near.

MARIANA. But—that's only their fears. Then it's not so bad.

DANIEL. Only fears, but you realize—

MARIANA. Of course. It's quite natural that you are alarmed and want to go to him even if you have to sacrifice everything else—including me.

DANIEL. Want to go? Don't say that. But fate has thrust upon me this painful duty. I must leave you.

MARIANA. It's all right; don't speak any more about it. Go, Daniel, and I pray that your fears may prove groundless.

DANIEL. Mariana!

MARIANA. Parents are sacred. What would I not have given up for my mother! What would I not sacrifice now to her memory! Happiness, pleasure, love—life! And you hesitate, Daniel? *(With deep feeling.)* Go at once to your father's bedside, or I shall believe you to be as other men—an egotist. *(After a pause, dryly, almost contemptuously.)* Don Joaquin, will you please tell Don Pablo what has happened and see if he will be so kind as to be my escort for this evening?

DANIEL. Mariana!

JOAQUIN. With pleasure. *(Goes.)*

MARIANA (*to Daniel*). Why don't you go? *(Looks at herself indifferently in a*

looking glass.)

DANIEL. Mariana, don't go to the ball!

MARIANA. Daniel!

DANIEL. Forgive me! I know that is too forward of me.

MARIANA. I won't call it that, but it's certainly childish. You're not yourself.

DANIEL. Madness—childishness—call it what you will—but I beg you not to go. This dance means nothing to you. What would it cost you to give it up for me? I'm suffering so deeply. Jealousy, anger, envy —envy of that man—have control of me. I am even forgetful of my father. Don't go!

MARIANA. Don't insist. You have no right to make me your slave. If you insist further, I shall consider it no longer childishness on your part, but impertinence.

DANIEL. Mariana, don't go with Don Pablo.

MARIANA. After asking him to go with me? Do you want me to make myself ridiculous? It's impossible, Daniel; and the best proof of how much I esteem you is that I am giving you explanations that are entirely unnecessary. *(She continues looking in the glass.)* You must fulfill your filial duties; let me fulfill my other duties —my social duties.

DANIEL. Duties! Nothing but a whim—a senseless whim!

MARIANA. Then, to satisfy my whim, if you will have it so; I can't help it. I'm so selfish and wicked that I care more about my whims than I do about yours.

DANIEL. For the last time I ask you—

MARIANA. Enough!

(*Through a side door enter Clara and Trinidad clad in dominos; Don Castulo and Luciano.*)

TRINIDAD *(to Mariana).* Are you ready?

CLARA. Well, are we going or not?

MARIANA. As soon as Don Pablo is here. *(The three ladies talk together.)*

CASTULO. If I had only known before. I have a collection of Venetian masks.

LUCIANO. I can imagine what they are like.

CASTULO. I'll wager you don't know what was the first mask ever used.

LUCIANO. I don't know. *(He moves away, but Don Castulo follows him.)*

CASTULO. I'll tell you.

CLARA *(to Daniel).* So you can't accompany us? I'm sorry, especially to hear of the reason.

TRINIDAD. But is it very serious?

DANIEL. I don't know.

MARIANA. Let's trust it is a false alarm. But don't delay on our account. Leave us to our frivolity. Here comes Don Pablo. *(Going to meet him.)* So, you will take me?

PABLO. I would go to the end of the world with you.

MARIANA. Always so good, so kind. That's genuine self-sacrifice. A man like you to be willing to take part in our escapades. Thank you, general, thank you. Good-by, Daniel. I sincerely hope you will find your father quite well. It's possible that on your return you will find me out of town, as I intend to go to La Granja for a few days. Would you go with me, Don Pablo?

PABLO. As a soldier, obedience to my superiors is my first duty. As a gentleman, obedience to a lady is my law of gallantry.

MARIANA. That is real chivalry. Take notice, gentlemen. Good-by, Don Joaquin. Good-by, Daniel; my best wishes. Until we meet again—whenever that may be. (*Shaking his hand.*)

DANIEL (*slowly and rudely*). I don't want you to go.

MARIANA (*aside to Daniel*). Daniel, be careful. (*To Don Pablo, taking his arm*). Come on; your arm, please. Go on, go on. (*As all arrive at the door.*) *En avant! Le drapeau est engagé!* Lead me to victory, general!

PABLO. Where shall we find victory?

MARIANA. And you, a hero, ask that? Why, wherever you conquer your enemy, of course. (*They go.*)

CASTULO *(to Luciano)*. No one can conquer me in regard to masks of any kind.

LUCIANO. I should think not. *(They go.)*

DANIEL. I can't—I won't leave her!

JOAQUIN. You can't forget your duty; you must go where your duty as a son takes you.

DANIEL. But that woman.

JOAQUIN. She is only a woman, and your father is your father.

DANIEL. A woman who will be my ruination. Don't be afraid; I am going first to my father's bedside; afterwards I am going to her! And then—I don't know into what abyss of destruction we shall plunge together.

JOAQUIN. Poor Daniel!

DANIEL. I'll come back, Mariana.

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

ACT II.

The stage represents a different reception room in Mariana's residence, luxuriously furnished. At the rear two doors leading to the garden. Late afternoon.

CLARA, TRINIDAD, LUCIANO.

TRINIDAD. That's to say, we all have some special purpose in visiting Mariana?

CLARA. All.

LUCIANO. All? *(Looking at Clara.)*

CLARA. What is yours, Trinidad—that is, if it's not a secret?

TRINIDAD. No, it's not a secret. Besides, neither my brother nor I have any secrets from you, Clara. I am a plenipotentiary minister and represent the general. *(Mysteriously.)*

CLARA. I understand—to ask formally for Mariana's hand?

TRINIDAD. Not formally as yet. These are only preliminary negotiations. My brother can't risk a refusal, and before he asks her formally in person it's necessary that Mariana should tell me sincerely just what her state of mind in regard to the matter is. She has certainly shown Pablo great favor. She evidently respects and admires him and treats him with marked consideration. You can't imagine how kind

she was to him during the week they spent at La Granja. From another woman such treatment would certainly have meant "Propose to me." In Mariana's case, I don't know.

LUCIANO. She also shows great affection for Daniel.

TRINIDAD. Daniel wasn't at La Granja.

LUCIANO. Because he was taking care of Senor Montaya—till the danger was past. On the one side was the danger of losing his father; on the other the danger of losing his sweetheart. Life is sown with dangers and the crop is always plentiful.

TRINIDAD. For Mariana, Daniel is merely a toy—a means of amusement. *(To Luciano.)* If she loved him, she wouldn't torture him as she does. It's pitiful sometimes.

CLARA. But if Mariana is so cruel, if you have so bad an opinion of her, why do you accept her as Pablo's wife?

TRINIDAD. Why, dear, I don't think that that means I have a bad opinion of Mariana. Goodness, is a woman bad just because she tortures a man? I should hope not. She is merely taking revenge in advance for what her husband will do to her.

CLARA *(to Luciano)*. Do you hear that?

LUCIANO. I thank you in behalf of the sex.

TRINIDAD. What sex?

LUCIANO. Mine—the stronger sex.

TRINIDAD. I didn't say that for your benefit.

CLARA. Poor Luciano! Don't tease him. My husband bothers him enough. *(Laughing.)*

LUCIANO. Oh, Don Castulo!

TRINIDAD. Besides, if there are men so undignified and so weak as to be willing to be tormented, why should we bother about them? I wager Mariana will never treat Don Pablo in that way. And, if they marry, Pablo will be the master—respectful but energetic, loving but not long suffering. And Mariana's coquetry will soon come to an end.

CLARA. That's true. Don Pablo will always be a careful guardian of his own honor.

LUCIANO *(in a whisper to Clara)*. He was going to be with his first wife, people say.

CLARA. Hush!

LUCIANO. Well, the general is a great man and a heroic soldier, but as a husband (*aside*) I prefer the archæologist.

TRINIDAD. Now, dear Clara, I have trusted my secret to you. What brings you to Mariana's today? It's not her reception day.

CLARA. I have also come as an ambassador.

TRINIDAD (*to Luciano*). And you?

LUCIANO. I came as an attaché of the embassy.

CLARA. But my mission is not so important as yours. Castulo is going to open his room of Mexican antiques in a few days, and he wants to celebrate the occasion by giving a dinner to his intimate friends. I have come to invite Mariana personally; my husband has doubtless invited Don Pablo already; you are invited by both of us. Other people—by cards only. There are still social distinctions, you know, dear. *(Laughing.)*

TRINIDAD. You are always so kind.

LUCIANO. And such a good archæologist.

CLARA. Don't be ungrateful toward poor Castulo. He showed you the Mexican room before any one else had seen it. There is nothing withheld from you in our home.

LUCIANO. That's true. So my gratitude shall be eternal.

TRINIDAD *(becoming impatient)*. But I wonder why Mariana doesn't come?

CLARA. We were told that she had just gone to take a drive, as she doesn't receive today. The maid told me that Mariana had been very nervous and depressed, so she doubtless wanted a little diversion.

LUCIANO. Mariana is not happy. Nobody is happy on this earth.

TRINIDAD. It's not an easy thing to be

happy when you have a character like hers. Believe me, what she needs is to get married. A steady, sensible man would soon put that capricious, unsettled brain of hers in order.

LUCIANO. Nothing so good for it as military discipline.

CLARA. Castulo has known her since she was very young, and he says that even in her childhood she was a very peculiar creature. Later family troubles—

LUCIANO. I heard something about that, too. It seems that Mariana's mother—

CLARA. That's it.

TRINIDAD. Tell me, tell me!

CLARA. My dear, I know very little—the little that Castulo told me, and Castulo is never well acquainted with things that happened more recently than two thousand years ago. As for contemporaneous affairs—

TRINIDAD. He told you something, anyhow.

CLARA. It seems that Mariana's mother suffered a great deal on account of her husband, who was an awful man.

TRINIDAD. And, at last, Mariana's mother —did she?

CLARA. She was very good—a very good woman—an angel!

TRINIDAD. And then?

CLARA. Castulo doesn't know anything

else. Just at that time he had to leave on an exploration trip to Babylonia, or Troy, I don't know which. He was away for three years and on his return he found that Mariana's mother was dead.

LUCIANO. Castulo heard rumors of a scandal—a flight to London—but very indefinite rumors. Mariana was already eleven years old and attracted attention by reason of her divine beauty and her air of profound melancholy. Castulo says she was a little Niobe.

TRINIDAD *(to Luciano)*. Who was Niobe?

LUCIANO. Niobe! Niobe! Don Castulo has explained to me who she was many times, but I can't recall now—something about petrified sorrow.

CLARA. Didn't you hear a carriage? It must be Mariana.

LUCIANO *(looking into the garden)*. Yes, it's she.

(*Mariana comes in by the rear entrance.*)

MARIANA. Why didn't you let me know?

TRINIDAD. It makes no difference.

CLARA. I decided to come at the last moment.

MARIANA. How are you, Luciano?

LUCIANO. Very glad to see you, Senora.

MARIANA. I had no idea you were coming. You didn't say anything about it to me last night. How long have you been here waiting?

CLARA. Not more than half an hour.

MARIANA. I was getting bored. I didn't feel well. So I went out for the sake of going out—to change my position, like people sick in bed do.

TRINIDAD. Are you sick?

MARIANA. No, I'm not really sick. But I don't know, the day was so gloomy, cheerless and no sunshine. I need light—lots of light. Darkness, strange to say, makes me feel nervous. Just the contrary of other people.

LUCIANO. Then you would be unable to live in London.

MARIANA. London! *(Controlling herself.)* Oh, don't speak to me about London. *(Laughing a forced laugh.)* It's ugly, repulsive, overwhelming! Believe me, it's terrible. That fog, that eternal gloom! Lots of people and yet nobody. A great deal of noise and silence in your soul. Life everywhere and death close beside you. Oh, I have never returned to London; I shall never return there. *(In spite of herself she is overcome by painful recollections.)*

CLARA. When were you there?

MARIANA *(as if awakening suddenly).* When? Oh, yes, when I was a child.

TRINIDAD. Yet you remember it well.

MARIANA. A child's memory is very impressionable. I went there when I was seven and came back here three years later.

But don't let us talk about London *(changing her tone)*; let us speak of Italy, Africa, Asia. *(Feigning merriment.)* Listen, I must steal your husband from you *(to Clara)* and we will take a trip alone, we two, to the Orient. I don't know anything about those ancient things that he knows so well, but I am very fond of them. So, my dear Clarita, I'll take away your husband from you and we'll go together—toward the rising sun.

LUCIANO. That's a good idea. Take him and carry him away far.

CLARA. We'll consider the proposal. I don't know if I shall accept. By the way, I have come to ask your acceptance to a proposal.

MARIANA. Mine?

CLARA. Yes. Let me explain the diplomatic mission with which I am charged. I invite you, in behalf of my husband and myself, to take dinner with us next Sunday. A great celebration! We are going to open the gallery of Mexican antiques. We'll be only a few—all intimate friends: Trinidad, Don Pablo, Luciano—

MARIANA *(doubtfully)*. I don't know.

CLARA. Don Joaquin and Daniel—

MARIANA *(changing her tone)*. Yes, I'll accept—with pleasure. And I'm much obliged to you both for your kindness. Mexican antiques—they must be queer things.

CLARA. Ask Luciano.

LUCIANO. Oh, yes; they're very queer.

MARIANA. You say on Sunday?

CLARA. Yes, on Sunday. It's a good ways off, but I wanted to make sure that you wouldn't have a previous engagement.

MARIANA. So! Sunday shall be devoted to Mexican antiques.

CLARA. Well, now, I am through with my embassy, so I'll withdraw and allow Trinidad to present *her* credentials.

MARIANA. You have also come on a mission?

TRINIDAD. I am entrusted with a very important mission. *(To Clara.)* But don't go.

MARIANA. Why, no; don't go. You will take a cup of tea and afterward remain for dinner. Don't make any excuse or objection now.

CLARA. As you will.

LUCIANO. Just as you will.

MARIANA. So you are entrusted with a mission, a very special mission?

TRINIDAD. And a private one.

MARIANA. That's queer. Private?

CLARA. That was the reason we wanted to leave. *(Pointing to Luciano.)*

LUCIANO. Exactly.

TRINIDAD. I don't want you to leave. I am going to take a walk in the garden with Mariana, and I shall tell her what I have to

then. I need poetic scenery: the trees, the flowers, the fountains, will plead for me.

MARIANA. It's all right, though I don't understand. And when we have finished our conference we'll let you know, and we'll all go and have tea in the sun parlor. Do you agree?

CLARA. Yes.

MARIANA *(to Trinidad as she takes her arm and they go slowly into the garden).* Let us go then. But is the matter really so important, so romantic, so private, as you suggested?

TRINIDAD. You will see.

MARIANA. I can't guess. *(Aside.)* Of course, I can.

TRINIDAD (*mysteriously*). It's about my brother.

MARIANA. Ah! a thorough gentleman and a very congenial friend.

TRINIDAD. Only that?

MARIANA. We'll finish our conference in the garden, otherwise it will be neither important, romantic or private. *(Turning her head.)* Good-by.

CLARA. Do you think Mariana will accept?

LUCIANO. No, I don't.

CLARA. Why not? The general stands high in society; he is in the flower of his manhood, is very talented and is famous as a man of great courage. Even what is

told about him, you know—that he was going to kill his first wife on account of jealousy—makes him interesting. *(In a low voice.)*

LUCIANO. I'm not so sure of that. If I were a woman I'd never marry an Othello.

CLARA. And, yet, there's no doubt about it: if Othello were to come to life again as a widower he would marry again within six months. Anyway, in spite of his apparent coldness, the general is crazy about Mariana.

LUCIANO. And about Mariana's money.

CLARA. About Mariana—just about herself. Why do you always think the worst?

LUCIANO. And she is crazy—quite crazy about Daniel.

CLARA. And she shows it by tormenting him?

LUCIANO. To torment is to love. Oh, Clarita, please torment me a little.

CLARA *(laughing)*. When Castulo gives me a chance to take his place.

LUCIANO. And when will that be?

CLARA. I don't know. He is very fond of you. He says you possess a genuine instinct for archæology and so much patience.

LUCIANO. And why am I so patient?

CLARA. For my sake.

LUCIANO. And why do I suffer?

CLARA. For his sake.

LUCIANO. And why must I go crazy?

CLARA *(laughing.)* For both our sakes.

LUCIANO. But we mustn't speak about crazy people. Here comes Daniel.

CLARA. Oh, yes; with his protector.

SERVANT *(preceding Don Joaquin and Daniel).* The senora is in the garden.

JOAQUIN. All right; we'll wait here. What an agreeable surprise! *(Shaking hands with Clara.)*

CLARA. For me, too. *(Turning to Daniel.)* Senor Montaya.

DANIEL. I'm very glad to see you, Clarita.

LUCIANO. How do you do, Daniel—Don Joaquin? (*They shake hands.*)

JOAQUIN. So Mariana is walking among the flowers?

CLARA. Yes.

LUCIANO. A flower among the flowers.

DANIEL. Is she alone?

CLARA. Trinidad is with her.

LUCIANO. A *private* interview.

DANIEL. Private?

CLARA. So they said.

JOAQUIN. Is that so?

CLARA. What's the matter with you, Daniel? You look impatient. *(Daniel keeps his eyes fastened on the garden.)*

DANIEL. I impatient? Why?

CLARA. Has your father quite recovered?

DANIEL. Yes, thanks, senora. It was only a false alarm—nothing more.

LUCIANO. Doesn't he ever come to Madrid?

DANIEL. Very rarely. He has grown so fond of his country house that he does not like to leave it. It was the same with his residence at Seville. He spent two full years there. We have almost an archæological museum there, and, as for Mexican antiques, Don Castulo can't beat us. My father also was very fond of collecting relics of an older time.

CLARA. You are quite the contrary. You like objects of more recent origin.

JOAQUIN. When we are young we like the big cities—the love of life. When we grow old we like the country—the love of rest. Mother earth is calling us. It seems as if the leaves that are stirred by the breezes, the brook that foams and bubbles in its rocky journey, the sunlight that filters in among the trees and strokes the grass with a touch that is glimmering splendor—it seems as though all these things were the smiles and caresses of our common mother, who says to her son: "Come to me, white-haired boy; your little cradle is prepared for you."

CLARA. Don't say such sad things, Don Joaquin.

LUCIANO. What with Dan Castulo and his archæology, you and your eternal elegy, and Daniel and his melancholy, we are real-

ly all in agony.

CLARA. Ave Maria!

JOAQUIN. But what I said wasn't sad.

CLARA. Yes, it was sad. Why, look at Daniel; he doesn't take his eyes off the garden.

LUCIANO. Mother Earth is calling him. And if it's not Mother Earth it must be Mother Nature.

CLARA. Don't be ironical, Luciano.

SERVANT. The senora says you may go to the sun parlor whenever you wish. Tea is served.

CLARA. Are we going there, Luciano?

LUCIANO. With you I will go not only to that beautiful garden, but even to Don Castulo's Mexican gallery.

CLARA (*to Don Joaquin and Daniel*). Are you coming?

JOAQUIN. Excuse me, I have also something to say to Mariana in private, and I'll wait for her here.

CLARA. Today is a day of private conferences for Mariana. Shall I tell her you wish to speak to her?

JOAQUIN. If you will be so kind.

CLARA. I am always kind to my friends. *(She goes to tea with Luciano.)*

LUCIANO. Shan't we have a private conference?

CLARA. We can have it only on the way to the sun parlor, for they are waiting for

us there.

LUCIANO. I'm sorry the way is so short. *(They go.)*

DANIEL. Are you going to speak to Mariana? Haven't you given up your scheme?

JOAQUIN. No; my resolve is irrevocable.

DANIEL. I'll let you do it for me. But put into it all the strength of mind that I lack. (*Daniel falls into an armchair. Don Joaquin approaches him affectionately.*)

JOAQUIN. I love you as if you were my son. You were the chum, almost the brother, of my dear son. Dear Fernando! When he was dying he said to me: "Take care of Daniel. His father is so ill that it is as if he had no father. Do you be a father to him." And I have tried to be that.

DANIEL. You are a father, a friend, an angel, who is ever near me to save me.

JOAQUIN. An angel of seventy years, and very gray haired. But anyway the angels in Heaven are much older, even if they aren't gray haired. Mariana is your bad angel. I'll be your bad angel.

DANIEL. No, Mariana is not bad. No matter what she does to me, Mariana is not bad.

JOAQUIN. I know what Mariana is. I have known her long. Yes, in her way, she is a noble, haughty, pure woman, but, al-

though she is good, she is dangerous. She is one of the women that make our brains whirl, that break our hearts, that receive every morning a kiss from the Goddess of Folly, that approach us bearing in the one hand happiness and in the other sorrow, and nobody knows, not even they themselves, which hand they are going to offer us.

DANIEL. But does she love me?

JOAQUIN. I don't know. I think she does, but I don't know.

DANIEL. But, if she loves me, let madness and sorrow overwhelm me, if they will, what does it matter? But I want her to tell me, I want to know it, and I'll never complain again.

JOAQUIN. My poor Daniel! You are indeed deeply smitten.

DANIEL. Doubt is killing me, Don Joaquin. Sometimes I feel compelled to take her beautiful neck between my quivering hands and strangle her; to drink in her last breath, my lips on hers and to think: "Anyway, she didn't die without kissing me." Don't say anything. I know this is madness.

JOAQUIN. No; I am glad of this. So today everything will be cleared up: either you will prosaically marry Mariana or you will go away from her forever.

DANIEL. Be separated from her? Never!

JOAQUIN. You are a man, and you must conduct yourself as a man of character and feeling. Either *with her*, as only an absolute master, or far away from her, so that she may not enjoy your suffering. *(With anger.)* Look out! I have a will of my own and can speak sternly to Mariana. And I tell you that woman shall listen to me. We'll see. *(Looking toward the garden as if to challenge Mariana.)* Don't you know her family history?

DANIEL. I met her just one year ago, yet it seems to me as though I had known her all my life. Her family—what do I care about her family?

JOAQUIN. Well, there were some very sad hours in her family life, and during those hours I was at little Mariana's side and at her mother's side. She shall hear me, I tell you; she shall respect me; and, were her character not what it is, I might almost say she shall obey me.

DANIEL. She will obey no one.

JOAQUIN. No? She is probably somewhat frightened at this moment. I wager she is not very calm now, if Clara told her I want to speak to her and am waiting for her. I wager she will leave every one else and come to look for me. She is thinking to herself, "Why does Don Joaquin wish to speak to me?" and the thought troubles her. *(Laughing at the picture of Mariana's*

fear his imagination presents to him.) She is afraid of me, I tell you, she is afraid of me!

DANIEL. She fears nobody, she must fear nobody. Am I not here to defend her? *(With passion.)*

JOAQUIN. What a silly notion! You are a poor devil and a foolish man besides. You were not foolish before, but you are now. Do you know how the first foolish man in the world was made? They made first a lover—that was easy—then they placed this lover by the side of the object of his passion, and, of course, he remained, like a fool, unable to say even, "I love you so much, so much!"

DANIEL. Do you notice that she isn't coming? *(Looking out into the garden.)*

JOAQUIN (*looking out also, after a pause*). Do you notice that she *is* coming? Didn't I tell you? Now, I'll tame the little shrew. And now you are going into the garden, you are going to halt before the first tree you find, you are going to adore it as though it were Mariana, and until I call you, you are going to repeat over and over again, "I love you so much, so much!" Hurry up!

DANIEL. How beautiful she is!

JOAQUIN. Will you leave me the field or not?

DANIEL. Yes, you're right. We must

finish. (*He goes L. into the garden.*)

JOAQUIN. We'll see now, little Mariana. I am going to wage serious war with you. Pure hearted, light headed as you are, you now have to deal with Don Joaquin, and —well, you shall not kill my Daniel.

MARIANA *(extremely affectionate).* My dear Don Joaquin—my father! Why didn't you come over there? *(Looking around.)* And Daniel, did he get tired of waiting for me? *(She drops into an armchair.)* I feel so sad, so depressed today. I don't know what's the matter, and I want to have my friends near me. You and Daniel are my best friends. You know it.

JOAQUIN. All right. You want to flatter us. Well, it is useless. I know you.

MARIANA *(sadly and affectionately).* Of course you know me; you have known me for many years.

JOAQUIN. I didn't come here to listen to soft speeches; I came to talk seriously.

MARIANA. Everybody wants to talk seriously today. I needed to be made merry—to be entertained with interesting conversation; and, instead, everybody wears the countenance of either an ambassador or a schoolmaster. *(With childish petulance and sadness.)*

JOAQUIN. Well, since I wear the countenance of a schoolmaster today, you must listen to me.

MARIANA. I'll listen to you humbly.

JOAQUIN. That's just what I want from you—humility. Do you sometimes examine your conscience?

MARIANA *(with surprise, sneeringly)*. I?

JOAQUIN. Answer me.

MARIANA. Well, yes—sometimes.

JOAQUIN. And what does your conscience tell you—that you are a bad woman or a good woman?

MARIANA. You make me laugh, and I don't want to.

JOAQUIN. Just answer me.

MARIANA. My conscience speaks in such a confused way that it's not easy to understand what it says. Besides, I question it when I'm going to sleep, and, as I'm half asleep and it's not very wide awake either, I don't know very well what I'm asking nor what it answers. And so, there we are.

JOAQUIN. Well, I'll question it for myself.

MARIANA *(childishly)*. Poor little thing! Leave it at rest.

JOAQUIN. That's impossible. Let us talk seriously. I know you are not really a bad woman, Mariana, but you are acting toward Daniel as though you were without a conscience or a heart.

MARIANA. Don Joaquin! I? Why?

JOAQUIN. You know it. Either you love him or you don't. If you do, don't torture

him. If you don't, then let him see plainly that there is no hope.

MARIANA. What are you saying—that I am torturing him?

JOAQUIN. Now you are not only a bad woman, but a hypocrite. You are perfectly aware that you are torturing him pitilessly, and you enjoy his martyrdom.

MARIANA *(vehemently)*. It's true!

JOAQUIN. Very well; you confess at last. And why do you act like that?

MARIANA. I don't know—doubtless because I'm very bad. But all the fault is not mine. Other people have made me what I am. I was good when I was a child. I felt within myself a great capacity for love and tenderness. I was always gentle, always affectionate. I was like a honeycomb full of sweet honey; they took the honey from the comb and they filled the cells with bitter things. Am I responsible that now my heart is bitter with gall instead of sweet with honey? *(Pressing her hand on her breast.)* I didn't put the gall there. Make your complaint to those who did.

JOAQUIN. Poor girl! You are right there.

MARIANA. When I was a little child, what were my surrounds at home? I was obliged to witness a constant, cruel struggle between my father and mother. My father —I don't know how it came about, but I

think it was due to something I overheard the servants saying that the thought first rose in my mind—"My father is a bad man." At first I was afraid of him; then I no longer loved him; later he made himself repugnant to me. Finally I became quite indifferent to him. Think of it—indifferent to my father at that age! What can you expect from me after that?

JOAQUIN. You are correct in all that. But your mother—

MARIANA. I loved my mother dearly—I always loved her—and if I could avenge the wrongs she suffered—oh, how I should rejoice! Yet the day came when I was afraid of my mother also. You know it—*(She remains thoughtful.)*

JOAQUIN. Go on, Mariana; your future depends on this conversation of ours. I know the events of your past life; I do not know the history of your inner life.

MARIANA. And you want to know the thorns of sorrow that have torn my heart and made it bleed, don't you?

JOAQUIN. Exactly. *(A group of people is seen in the garden—Trinidad, Clara and Luciano—but they go away again.)*

MARIANA. I'll go on then. Is some one listening? *(Going to the back of the stage.)*

JOAQUIN. They were coming here, but when they saw us so engrossed in our conversation they went off again. *(They come*

back to their original positions. Mariana is thoughtful. Joaquin watches her closely.) Why don't you continue? Go on; tell me of your inner experiences; I am acquainted with the external facts already.

MARIANA. Did you know Don Felix Alvarado? *What pleasure it gives me (terrible irony) to pronounce that name! (Biting her lips.)*

JOAQUIN. I didn't know him.

MARIANA. He was good looking, attractive, affectionate, though somewhat melancholy. I don't know where he came from—I think it was South America. He appeared to be a wealthy man. I don't know if he really was, but, anyhow, he lent my father a great deal of money. And how respectful he was toward my mother! How affectionate toward me!

JOAQUIN. I know all this. Be brief.

MARIANA. You wanted me to make an examination of my conscience, and it's well that you should know how much I have suffered, so that you may understand why I sometimes enjoy making other people suffer.

JOAQUIN. But how is Daniel to blame in all this?

MARIANA. You're right. Poor Daniel! *(She is silent and ponders.)*

JOAQUIN. Well, finish your story.

MARIANA. Listen to me. I was eight

years old. One morning—it must have been about two or three o'clock—I was sleeping in my little bed and dreaming that I was kissing my doll because she had called me "Mamma." Suddenly the doll kissed me, too, but so violently that she hurt me, and the doll grew very big, and now it was my mother holding me in her arms—and—I wasn't asleep any more. It wasn't a dream. I was awake. Behind my mother stood a man. It was Alvarado saying to my mother, "Come on," and my mother replied, "No, not without her!" and he said, "All right; take her along then." Then followed what seemed like another dream—this time a nightmare. My mother was dressing me as a mad woman might dress a marionette, shaking and pulling me, almost kicking me, and Alvarado incessantly urging her on. "Quick! Hurry up!" I have never experienced anything like that. It was grotesque, absurd and yet awful! My little stockings half down, my little shoes unbuttoned, my undershirt across my shoulders, my dress half loose, and I continually crying to her, "There are hooks undone still! There are hooks still undone!" But Alvarado was repeating, "Quick! Hurry up!" Then they tied a coat of my mother around my body and a shawl that nearly suffocated me. My mother took me in her arms. The

next moment we were being whirled along in a carriage at a breakneck pace. I remember hearing a kiss and thinking, "Whom has she kissed? I didn't get a kiss." Oh, my mother, my mother! *(She bursts out crying.)*

JOAQUIN. That's enough.

MARIANA. No. You wanted to examine my conscience. Well, you shall do it. You wanted an open confession; I'll confess everything. You wanted to know what they made of me; well, you know now. You wanted to know why I believe in nobody, except in you; you know that now also. I'm nearly finished. We went to London. What a life, my God, what a life! My mother had cried very much in Madrid, but she cried more in London. I was always looking at her with wide open eyes. I knew enough not to cry. My mother was a very good woman—I insist she was a very good woman—but that man was a brute. How often in my sight he compelled her to clothe her body in silks and laces and jewels—compelled her by force, brutally, with curses and blows—as they had dressed me on that fatal night. Then, when he had finally succeeded in getting her dressed to his own satisfaction—then she kissed *me*—not him—with tears and sobs—and he dragged her away from me, and I was left alone to spiritual decay and death—like a

rose thrown aside in a heap of refuse.

JOAQUIN. No more, no more!

MARIANA. Finally he got tired of her—he left her—left us both in abject misery, facing starvation and death. My mother lay in agony; I walked the streets. I went to you. You were very good to me; you had not been embittered by suffering as I had been. *(She lays her head on his shoulder and embraces him, sobbing bitterly.)*

JOAQUIN. Yes, my poor Mariana! I buried your mother. I took you and brought you to Spain, to your father, and you were happy.

MARIANA. Happy! Treated with courteous indifference by those nearest me, with respect, indeed, by the servants, but a respect bought with gold. My father always away, my governess always by me, and my mother nowhere. I am willing to suffer, but I want to enjoy also. Let pain come in floods if it brings one drop, only one drop of love. Ah, how I missed all the kisses that were mine in London, even though they had been given with tears!

JOAQUIN. My poor little girl! If I could only root out from your memory all these recollections!

MARIANA. Then, my marriage! We have not spoken of my marriage yet. *(With ironical laughter.)* "This is your husband," my father announces to me, showing me a

picture. I look at it, and it seems to me the likeness of an attractive man. "All right, I'll marry him." "He is very wealthy." "So much the better for me." We are married by proxy. I'm sent to Cuba, and on my arrival some gentlemen dressed in black are waiting for me. It's not a wedding; it's a funeral. *(With indifference.)* Never mind. My loving husband had died as the result of a duel on account of a dancer. Another illusion destroyed. And so, with the same enthusiasm with which I had said, "All right, I'll marry," I now said, "All right, I'll be a widow." What do you want me to be now, Don Joaquin? How do you want me to feel? In what, in whom do you want me to believe? In men? Why should I? They will all prove to be like my own father, like Alvarado, like my husband! No, let them suffer, let them die, for all I care!

JOAQUIN. Daniel is not like that. He does not deserve the treatment that other men do.

MARIANA. It seems he is different, but perhaps he will prove to be just the same. Alvarado was very attractive, too, and he wanted to kill my mother. Daniel has never cried—at least, I've never seen him. But I saw Alvarado cry—at the beginning. My husband died for the sake of a low woman. Daniel has not died as yet for *my*

sake. Let him do that, and, afterwards, we'll see. *(With deep irony and a hard, cruel laugh.)*

JOAQUIN. No, you shall do nothing of the kind with Daniel, you little wildcat. I'll draw your talons. Do you want Daniel Montaya to pay the penalty for Felix Alvarado's crimes? I'll prevent that. I see now what you are, and I'm very sorry to see it! I wish I had never rescued you from a London gutter!

MARIANA. Don Joaquin!

JOAQUIN. Do you think that because you have known evil, everything is evil? Walk on marshy ground and you will probably fall into the mire; but turn aside, go further on and you will find valleys bright with flowers, where are shady woods and snow white mountains.

MARIANA. Ah, if I might find such a place, such a valley.

JOACHIN. If you stay in the mire it's your own fault. Go forward! Tell me, you stubborn child, are there no good people in the world? Wasn't your mother a good woman—in spite of all?

MARIANA. Yes. (*Earnestly taking his arm*).

JOACHIN. Weren't you good when you were a little girl?

MARIANA. I was.

JOACHIN. And I—don't you think I am

a good man?

MARIANA. Of course!

JOACHIN. Then why is it unlikely that Daniel should be good, also?

MARIANA. Let him prove it.

JOACHIN. That's easy.

MARIANA. How?

JOACHIN. Marry him.

MARIANA (*with a sneer*). So he wants to marry me?

JOACHIN. That shows bad taste on his part, don't you think so? For your sake he has refused—I am sure of the fact—another woman (*exaggerating*); younger than you, only eighteen, more beautiful than you, wealthier than you, and with a better disposition. So you see how silly Daniel has been.

MARIANA (*coldly*). He was wrong. And yet, you see, if he loves me better than that other woman, notwithstanding that she is younger, more beautiful, wealthier and better—he is right.

JOACHIN. Would you have been sorry if he had married her? I want to know the truth. Consider carefully and don't lie to me.

MARIANA. Yes.

JOACHIN. Then you love him?

MARIANA. It's possible, but I don't know.

JOACHIN. But you must know, and if you

don't love him, let him go forever.

MARIANA. Why? If he is happy near me, if he is happy suffering through me, and I am happy making him suffer, why have we to separate? (*Ironically, but with some genuine feeling.*)

JOACHIN (*rudely*). Because a man like him was not born to be a toy for anybody, not even for you.

MARIANA (*coquettishly*). Am I so little deserving?

JOACHIN. He deserves much more. (*Angrily.*) With me all your attempts at coquetry are useless.

MARIANA (*in a childish way*). How cross you are to-day with your little Mariana!

JOACHIN. Now, seriously, for the last time: either you will become his wife or I shall take him away from Madrid to join that other girl. The girl of eighteen years —and eighteen millions.

MARIANA. No. I won't marry him, and you shan't take him away.

JOACHIN. No?

MARIANA (*challenging him, laughing*). No! I am not a child any more.

JOACHIN. We shall see! (*Going to garden door.*) Daniel! Daniel!

MARIANA (*with some feeling*). Are you calling him?

JOACHIN. You hear me, don't you?

Daniel!

MARIANA. But, for goodness' sake, don't call him yet! We have not finished our conference. We must find a *modus vivendi.* (*Laughing.*) Don't you think so?

JOACHIN. Daniel! Come!

MARIANA (*with ill concealed excitement*). What's the matter with you today?

DANIEL. Mariana! (*Restraining himself.*) Senora!

MARIANA. Good day, Daniel.

JOACHIN (*to Daniel*). I have done for your sake what a father wouldn't do for his own son. I have done all that I can for you both, but I can't stand it anymore. If you want to follow my advice bid Mariana a final good-by. (*To Mariana.*) If you want to obey my command, since I am almost entitled to command you, disillusion him and don't see him any more. I have spoken as an honest,open-hearted man would speak to two people whom he loves dearly, but whom he knows are not quite in their right senses. Whether you heed what I have said, or not, I have finished. Decide for yourselves. I am curious to see what two mad people will decide. Untie the knot that binds you together, if you can; if you can't, then tie it so tight that it can never be loosened. I'll see you later. I'm going to take some tea—no, some

lemon ice.

MARIANA. But, Don Joachin!

JOACHIN. I'm dying for some ice.

DANIEL. Don Joachin!

JOACHIN. Lots of ice. Good-by! (*Aside.*) They love each other; they will come to an understanding.

MARIANA (*sitting down, rather carelessly.*) He is angry because he says I am tormenting you, that you are very unhappy, that I ought not to see you any more. (*Sadly.*)

DANIEL. No, Mariana, torment me as much as you like, but don't forbid me to see you.

MARIANA (*sadly, as before*). Don Joachin says I'm very cruel.

DANIEL. Never mind. It's I that am suffering, and if I want to go on suffering, what right have other people to interfere?

MARIANA. Do you want us to be good friends? I'll be very kind to you—never the least bit cruel—if ever I am cruel, which I am not at all sure of.

DANIEL. No! Not friends! I prefer to continue as before. I loving you and telling you of my love; you hating me, tormenting me, but sometimes giving me a little hope even if I know it's only a lie. Let us go on; let us go on. I am still able to suffer more, and if you enjoy seeing me suffer, you may continue to torture me.

MARIANA (*impatiently*). How unjust you are to me! Then I am a monster, a sphynx!

DANIEL. But I'm not complaining at all. What were my heart's fibres made for but to be played upon by you, so that you may draw from them sweet melodies or harsh discords, according to your desire? What happiness! I am the only one you enjoy tormenting. No one means to you quite what I do. What I want is to be treated differently from the others. To Don Pablo you give respect, courtesy, kind words—to me! Ah, to me you say, "Come here, Daniel, fawn at my feet like a dog, suffer, cry aloud, go mad, die!" Two beings may be joined together either by love or by hatred. In our case love is out of the question. You do not love me. Well, let me have your hate then. Let me be near you. let me feel your dainty fingers tearing my heart to shreds, let your eyes burn into my soul; and drink with delight, if you will, the breath of my agony. But near me, near me, never far away! Be separated from you?—never.

MARIANA. But, my goodness, I am not the woman you suppose me to be! I can't love—because I can't. I have been very unfortunate, and all my tenderness and confidence have been dried up. And I feel no love, no tenderness; I don't want to feel

any. To give away one's heart, that means to lose it for ever, to cast it at other people's feet for them to despise and scorn. Why, if I say to you: "Yes, I love you, I accept you, I'll be your wife," as soon as I have said that you will begin to love me less already, and your love will gradually decrease and disappear. "She is mine? Good-by, passion! Good-by, delight; Good-by, my illusions!" When you think I'm laughing at you, it's not you that I'm laughing at but at the thought that comes to me. "Poor Daniel, he really fancies he loves me very much! What a good joke it would be if I accepted him!"

DANIEL. You don't understand what is going on here. (*He strikes his breast.*)

MARIANA. Oh, yes, I do Daniel; we are all alike. If I came to feel a real passion for you, what madness, what shame, what despair would be mine! (*It is easy to see she is fighting against her growing affection for Daniel.*)

DANIEL. Despair, maybe; but there is real happiness. Don't you understand the happiness of suffering? Have you never tasted it? Then I'm happier than you. Indifference, loathing, insipid things—a perennial, soft twilight, a single monotonous sound, a drowsy limbo—that, that is despair and death. Is that your life, Mariana? Then you are more unfortunate

than I.

MARIANA. That is true, that is really true.

DANIEL. Try what loving and suffering really mean, just once during your life. Love me, Mariana! I ask it now, not for my sake, but for yours! And if you have doubts about me, so much the better! You will love me the more. And the greater your doubts and your anguish the greater will be your happiness. And if you fear you will lose me forever, ah, then your love will be infinite!

MARIANA. It would be a curious experiment, Daniel.

DANIEL. When we love with our souls then the world that surrounds us, the world of no importance, disappears and our love creates a new world. I see you everywhere. I feel for you every kind of love. Sometimes a father's tenderness. Then I contemplate you with pride and respect. I pet you as though you were a child; I caress your hand; I rearrange a rebel curl and kiss you on the forehead.

MARIANA. Poor Daniel! Poor me! I never had a father to love me in that way.

DANIEL. At other times I think of you as of a sister, or as of a friendly comrade. I put my arm about your waist and you put yours around my neck and we go to play in the fields, running like children—

and if you could see what naughty children we are!

MARIANA. How good you are! And how unfortunate I! I never had a brother to play with like that.

DANIEL. Sometimes—it is very queer, I don't know how it is—but I am your husband and we have a house of our own and a family and a little cozy corner just for us two. And time flies on angel's wings and we even grow old! Ah, what fancies!

MARIANA. They are fancies, indeed! (*Laughing.*) And what are we doing?

DANIEL. I am dying of old age, and you, who are also very old, embrace me, crying, and I hear you saying to me as in a dream: "Yours, Daniel, in life and in death!" Your tears flow over the furrows that time has worn upon my cheeks, and your white curls fall on my parched lips; and my soul escapes from the clutches of death, for just a moment, long enough that I may kiss for the last time those white curls, as once I kissed Mariana's black curls.

MARIANA (*touched, wiping her eyes*). What a fancy! But you see these curls are still black! (*Coquettishly.*)

DANIEL. But they'll grow white some day, and who will kiss them then, if I am not there.

MARIANA. But why shouldn't you be there?

DANIEL. Because you don't want me to be.

MARIANA. Nonsense! I didn't say that. —Well, are your dreams ended?

DANIEL. No. Very often I am not father, nor brother, nor friend, nor husband, nor old man. I am your passionate Daniel! And I am very close to you and you do not repulse me. (*Approaching her.*)

MARIANA. Well, I won't repulse you —if it's only for the sake of curiosity.

DANIEL. And I hold your hand. But not with the soft pressure of a father or a brother; I press it passionately between mine until I hurt you.

MARIANA (*laughing*). No, you haven't hurt me yet.

DANIEL. I have, but you don't feel it.

MARIANA. Really you haven't. But the dream ends here—everything has been only a dream—let's wake up. (*Moving away.*)

DANIEL. But I was going to tell you what Mariana says in my dreams—you know, the Mariana of whom I dream.

MARIANA. I can guess it without your repeating it.

DANIEL. And you won't repeat it!

MARIANA. I? Repeat what she says? Oh, no; it would compromise me.

DANIEL. Well, then, say just this one thing.

MARIANA. What? If it's not much.

DANIEL. Don't tell me that you love me; tell me that you will try to see if you can love me. (*A pause.*)

MARIANA (*resolved*). I will try.

DANIEL. Say also that if you are not able to love me you will not love any other man.

MARIANA. Either you or nobody.

DANIEL. Not even Don Pablo?

MARIANA. Don Pablo! What a child you are! (*She rises, laughing. Daniel rises also. Don Joachin comes in without being heard.*)

DANIEL. But if you ever love another man—I swear it on my honor—if you ever love another man—

MARIANA. Yes, I know. You will kill both of us. (*With a mock tragic air.*)

DANIEL (*holding her hand*). As true as God hears us.

MARIANA. Now you *have* hurt me.

DANIEL. Is the agreement made?

MARIANA. Made and sealed. And if you squeeze a little harder, sealed with blood!

JOACHIN. Have you made an agreement?

MARIANA. Yes. And we have you as witness.

JOAQUIN. I'll be a witness. (*Clara, Trinidad and Luciano come in talking and laughing.*)

CLARA. And if more witnesses are need-

ed, we're here.

LUCIANO. We are all here.

TRINIDAD. All.—But what is the matter?

JOACHIN. It's a secret agreement.

DANIEL (*to Mariana*). Do you ratify it?

MARIANA (*giving him her hand*). I ratify it before them all.

DANIEL. Life is the stake.

MARIANA. Let it be so.

JOACHIN. What an opportunity if I were a priest! (*He pretends to bless them.*)

MARIANA (*laughing*). A blessing! Well, it can't do any harm anyway. (*To Trinidad.*)

DANIEL. With a blessing I shall win everything. (*They stand holding hands, while Don Joachin blesses them. The others surround them laughing.*)

ACT III.

ACT III.

The stage represents a parlor in Don Castulo's residence. Two or three other parlors, partly visible to the spectator, open into it, either from the rear or from the sides. In all of these there are many objects of art and archaeological specimens — bronzes, clay statues, rugs, paintings, etc. Every liberty is allowed the stage manager in the selection of these objects. The important thing is to get the atmosphere for the whole act, and nothing that can help create this atmosphere need be omitted. It is Don Castulo's house, nothing else. Daytime.

CLARA *and* DON PABLO.

CLARA. So you are not very fond of examining antiques?

PABLO. I am for modern things. As for old things, I have enough with old age waiting for me. I like youth and novelty, the things that bring with them the brightness of morning and the laughter of the day dawn.

CLARA. That is why you love Mariana so much.

PABLO. That—and the fact that she is Mariana.

CLARA. Is it indiscreet of me to talk to

you of our beautiful, good friend?

PABLO. You are never indiscreet, and certainly not when you talk to me of her.

CLARA. She is very good and very beautiful, isn't she? But she lacks judgment.

PABLO. Nobody has any judgment. Why, there is only one day in the history of the universe given over to judgment; the day of judgment you know.

CLARA (*laughing*). And that's the reason they call it the *final* judgment, it's the first and the last.

PABLO. You see. Am I by any chance possessed of judgment? And I am old enough to have good judgment, and not so old that I am no longer entitled to any. At fifteen years we haven't any judgment; at forty-eight, it's required; at sixty-eight it may be dropped. Of what use is judgment?

CLARA. So you are not wise?

PABLO. No, senora.

CLARA. Why?

PABLO. Trinidad told you; There is no secret about it, I asked for Mariana's hand, in spite of your kind advice and warning. She declined with courteous words the honor which she said I offered her.

CLARA. And then?

PABLO. Well, I haven't given up. At this very moment my sister is probably talking to Don Joachin about the matter.

She has repulsed me and yet I make another assault. Both my father and mother were very stubborn, and I was always a wonder in that respect.

CLARA. A man in love must be stubborn.

PABLO. I am anyhow.

CLARA. Then you don't renounce your claim to Mariana's hand?

PABLO. Not at all.

CLARA. And if you should be vanquished?

PABLO. And if I should win?

CLARA (*laughing*). You would know what to do in that case. But let us look at the worst. I repeat, if you should be vanquished?

PABLO. The vanquisher of to-day is the vanquished of to-morrow. I am forty-eight. I can wait fifteen years more. Troy was taken in ten years.

CLARA (*laughing*). You are Homeric.

PABLO. Not very. A woman is not a fortified city.

CLARA. But a woman, Helen, was in that city.

PABLO. And Menelaus took her and brought her back again to his own country.

CLARA. Would you be satisfied with that?

PABLO. Oh, no. Our classic traditions wouldn't permit of my being as peaceful as those heroes were. For resistance I re-

turn determination; for beauty, homage; for betrayal the wholesome teachings of "The Doctor of His Own Honor." (*With a forced laugh.*)

CLARA. Now you are tragic.

PABLO. Now and always, I am a man of honor, infatuated with a woman and aspiring to the right of calling her my wife.

CLARA. At any risk?

PABLO. At any risk.

CLARA. Without fear of rivals?

PABLO. Without fear of anyone.

CLARA. Ready to conquer?

PABLO. Ready to fight.

CLARA. I like men like that.

PABLO. I like women like Mariana—and wives like you. (*Very courteously.*)

CLARA. Here comes Trinidad and Don Joachin, and judging from their looks the interview has not resulted very satisfactorily.

PABLO. It couldn't have. But never mind.

CLARA. What do you think of my husband's collections?

JOACHIN. They are certainly very fine. But I'm not competent to give a critical opinion.

CLARA. Don Joachin is like Don Pablo; he doesn't like old things.

JOACHIN. Fads of old people, don't you think so, Don Pablo?

PABLO. I haven't any fads as yet.

JOACHIN. I have many. (*Clara and Don Joachin together, Trinidad and Don Pablo.*)

PABLO. What does he say?

TRINIDAD. That he is neither father nor dictator to Mariana.

PABLO. In other words, he declares war on us.

TRINIDAD. That's just what I told him.

PABLO. What did he answer?

TRINIDAD. That war must always be welcome to such a brave soldier as you.

PABLO. So it is. All right; we'll see.

CLARA. Here comes Mariana. I'm sure she likes all my husband's bric-a-brac. (*Mariana, Don Castulo and Luciano come in from the side.*)

MARIANA. Exquisite! Wonderful! What a collection! Your house is a charmed palace, Don Castulo.

CASTULO. You have lots of talent. There are only two persons here that possess what we may call the true archæological spirit—Mariana and Luciano.

JOACHIN. Luciano, too?

CASTULO. Luciano is already a professor.

CLARA. A professor! I thought he could never get beyond being a good pupil.

CASTULO. A professor! He is in ecstasy while listening to me. He does not dare to

breathe.

LUCIANO. I don't; it's true.

PABLO (*to Mariana*). Do you like these antiques very much?

MARIANA. Very much, Don Pablo. How gladly should I live in this house! But alone, quite alone. How I should love to walk at sunset through these rooms! And watch this great array of objects slowly taken from my sight! To see the last glow of the sunset bringing to life here and there lost reflections of its glory, fugitive gleams, sudden flashes of light—now from a steel helmet, then from a dagger, or a brocade cloth; from a purple mantel, a bronze lamp or a Moorish plate. What thoughts would come to me! What stories! What dreams! And this without my knowing anything about all these things here; mixing them up, confusing them; yet a twilight shadow fallen from sky, and just a piece of clay, or iron, of cloth—some relic of a dead and ruined century—that would be enough for me.

LUCIANO. Not for me.

MARIANA. Believe me, Don Castulo, I envy you all this; if I could, I should steal your treasure from you.

CASTULO (*with an air of triumph, turning to others.*) How about that?

LUCIANO. We all envy you your treasure.

CASTULO. (*As before.*) How about that?

MARIANA. And the collection of arms? Where are those men now who once stamped the marks of their fury on dented iron and steel?

LUCIANO. Not here I guess.

MARIANA. Why, everything is so wonderful! There is a little brick which Don Castulo says came from Echatana, which has a little depression in it, just as if a finger tip had been pressed into the soft clay. Do you know what that mark was? I soon had a story to explain it. A poor slave was making that brick, and the overseer, or whatever he was called in those days, noticing that he was rather lazy, struck him across his naked shoulders with his whip. I see it all before me in imagination. (*With emphasis.*) A leather strap with copper nails—isn't that right, Don Castulo? (*Don Castulo smiles.*) And the slave's body contracted with pain and he pressed his finger on the clay. And there it remains, an eternal mark of human agony stamped on a piece of chalk; petrified pain which after thousands of years says to us: "There have always been victims to be tortured, executioners to torture them, and clay to preserve the evidence of this cruelty from century to century!

CASTULO. Very good, very good.

TRINIDAD. What a mind!

CLARA. What an imagination!

PABLO (*to Joachin*). She has a great deal of talent.

JOACHIN. Too much.

LUCIANO (*to Clara*). And on what clay have your cruelties been recorded?

CLARA. Ask Don Castulo.

MARIANA. What irritates me is the passivity with which those things watch us live and die. I wish they were animated and could take active part in our lives, that the tears of yesterday might mingle with the tears of to-day, and the anger of those ancient people with our anger.

CLARA. How terrible!

PABLO. But you never become angry.

JOACHIN. Don't you think she does?

TRINIDAD. Mariana never becomes angry —of course not.

MARIANA. I should become angry if any of those things should suddenly come to life and do anything to cause me pain. You would soon see all that bric-a-brac lying smashed on the floor.

CASTULO. Oh, never that, Mariana!

LUCIANO. Oh, no, don't do anything like that!

JOACHIN. Luciano protests at once.

CASTULO. But you haven't seen the greatest curiosity of all yet.

MARIANA. The Mexican room?

CASTULO. That, too. But I mean something else. A surprise that I have in reserve

for Luciano.

LUCIANO. Good heavens! I wonder what that is.

TRINIDAD. What is it?

JOACHIN. What is this something?

PABLO. Didn't you hear—it's only for Luciano?

CASTULO. At present we'll go to the Mexican room.

TRINIDAD. Let's go.

MARIANA. Daniel hasn't come yet.

CASTULO. We'll wait a little.

MARIANA. Yes, let us wait for Daniel. He knows so much about these things. How about you, Don Pablo?

PABLO. I don't know anything about them, Senora Mariana.

MARIANA. Daniel does. He told me that his father also has valuable collections. Do you know him, Don Castulo? Do you know Senor Montaya?

CASTULO. I have never had the pleasure of meeting him. He lives in retirement, you know, at his country house.

MARIANA. Yes, he is always ill.

CASTULO. I have heard say that at Seville he has some very interesting things. But in spite of his being a South American and my being a European, I wager my Mexican room is worth more than his, if he has any at all. I have some really wonderful things. Especially one treasure, that I

keep in a glass bell—I wouldn't sell that for thirty thousand dollars. Wait till you see it; your imagination will create a beautiful story around this treasure.

MARIANA (*with interest*). What is it?

TRINIDAD. Oh, tell us, Don Castulo.

JOACHIN. You must prepare us.

PABLO. Such things really need a great deal of preparing for. Strong emotions ought not to come suddenly.

LUCIANO. Yet they do come suddenly.

MARIANA. Don Castulo! I am dying of curiosity.

CASTULO. It's what I call the "Mexican Earring." You will find it described in any treatise on archæology. It's only a golden ring from which hang, by three delicate chains of the same metal, three little winged figures, carved in gold also, and perfectly formed, with their right hands on their mouths. (*He says all this with great emphasis and enjoying the effect he is causing. The ladies are seated. The men so arranged as to give movement and life to the scene.*)

TRINIDAD. Well, something like peasant earrings?

CASTULO. Something like them, but not exactly. Two of these earrings were found —so all the treatises say—in a grave discovered through excavations made at Tehuantepec. They were in two mummies, of

the Zapoteca race, doubtless, and each one had one of those earrings attached to its lower lip by a hook. One earring for each mummy.

MARIANA. What a queer thing! And what were they?

CASTULO. Were they ornaments worn in life? There are examples of such.

JOACHIN. But they were not ornaments for orators and women. That is what they should have been. (*Everybody laughs.*)

CASTULO. Were they symbolic objects intended only for the sepulchre? I wonder if it isn't possible that they symbolized the silence of those mummified lips.

TRINIDAD. Awful.

MARIANA. Go on, Don Castulo.

CASTULO. Were they the pledges of the mutual love of those two beings who for an eternity were sending icy kisses to one another through the little winged figures, messages of the tenderness of the living through the darkness of death? Who knows?

MARIANA. Yes, there's no doubt of it, they were pledges of love—of eternal love!

PABLO. How interested you are, Mariana, in those winged figures.

TRINIDAD. Are we going to see them?

MARIANA. I won't go to see them until Daniel has arrived. And how did you get your treasure? You said it was a very rare

object.

CASTULO. Rare? There is only one other like it in the world! You can see in any book: there are only two! One is mine, the other is in the possession of the man who gave me mine. He gave it to me in exchange for a Venus of the classic period. But I won on the exchange. I'm never taken in. I take in others sometimes—(*Laughing.*)

PABLO. And who was the victim? Of course, you remember him?

CASTULO. It's fourteen or sixteen years ago, but I never forget the name of one of my victims. I knew him in Paris! He was a handsome man, a man of the world, too, with a complicated life history. He appeared very wealthy; he was prominent in the South American republics, but later he disappeared and I don't know what became of him. He is probably dead, for the life he was leading couldn't last very long.

PABLO. What was his name?

CASTULO. Don Felix Alvarado.

MARIANA (*unable to restrain herself*). Alvarado!—Alvarado!

JOACHIN (*aside*). Mariana!

CASTULO. Did you know him?

MARIANA. I? Why, impossible! I am not yet an antique, my dear Castulo! (*With a forced laugh.*)

CLARA (*to her husband*). You say

such silly things.

MARIANA. I was but a child at that time. Even if I had met him, I couldn't remember him now. I said Alvarado!—Alvarado! Don Castulo's victim! Poor man! Clarita, your husband is awful,—How about it Trinidad?—You see, Don Pablo, the very best of men are sometimes pitiless! What a trick Don Castulo played on him!—Poor Alvarado!

LUCIANO. And he kept the other earring?

CASTULO. Of course.

JOACHIN. But aren't we going to see that Mexican room?

MARIANA. Yes, go to see that curiosity.

TRINIDAD. Let's go.

LUCIANO. Yes. Come on—all.

CASTULO (*embracing Luciano and laughing*). Ah, your archæological blood is aroused!

CLARA (*to Mariana, seeing that she doesn't stir*). You're not coming?

MARIANA. I saw so many things in the other gallery, that my nerves are a little upset. Before seeing anything more, I should like to rest a little while.

PABLO. No doubt you want to wait for Daniel.

MARIANA. He is well acquainted with antiques and I should like to see what an impression those sepulchral earrings will

make on him (*laughing*) and how he will interpret the winged figures.

PABLO. I always respect your wishes.

MARIANA (*giving him her hand*). You are very good. I respect you as a thorough gentleman and esteem you as a loyal friend.

PABLO. Thank you, Mariana. (*To the others.*) Are we going?

CASTULO. All right.

CLARA (*caressing Mariana*). Reflect, reflect and dream, capricious little being that you are.

TRINIDAD. You must link that dead world (*pointing to the galleries*) to this living world.

MARIANA. Everything is linked together in this world, and I should not be surprised if the mummies of Tehuantepec should rise from their graves to come and trouble my existence. (*Laughing.*)

TRINIDAD. What a whimsical Mariana! (*Leaving her.*)

JOACHIN (*staring at her for a moment*). What a whimsical Mariana!

CASTULO. Step in, step in.

PABLO. Let us look at prehistoric America.

LUCIANO. Yes, let us look at it—for the fifth time.

MARIANA. Alvarado!—The scoundrel!—The man of those orgies in London! The man who killed my mother with shame and

suffering and hunger! As soon as I hear his name mentioned the slumbering fire of my hatred rises again in my breast. Time is powerless to erase some memories! Ah, if Alvarado should prove to be alive! If I could give him back pain for pain, shame for shame, torture for torture! To revenge my mother on him and on his offspring! (*A pause.*) Don Joachin is right; the impurity and misfortune with which my childhood was stained, have planted deep in me the root of evil! Alvarado! Alvarado! (*Daniel enters.*) Alvarado! Ah! (*Recovering her self-control.*) It's Daniel! (*With sweetness.*)

DANIEL. Mariana!

MARIANA (*giving him her hand*). It's you! I thought—how foolish of me!—but I thought it was someone else.

DANIEL. Who?

MARIANA. I don't know. Some other man. There are so many people in the world!

DANIEL. And who is it that is powerful enough to frighten my Mariana?

MARIANA. Anybody could do that. I am so nervous to-day that anybody could frighten me, if they came upon me suddenly.

DANIEL. Even I?

MARIANA (*tenderly*). No, not you. You are the only man that I am glad to see

to-day.

DANIEL. Do you mean it?

MARIANA. I was waiting for you so impatiently.

DANIEL. Were you really?

MARIANA. Yes. They wanted to take me to the gallery of American antiques, and I said, "No, not without Daniel." (*With playful tenderness.*) Now isn't that deserving of gratitude?

DANIEL. But is it really the truth? Did you think that?

MARIANA. Certainly, and not only thought it, but actually said it. I have the courage of my convictions—and of my feelings; and when I like some one I proclaim the fact openly. I said: "I don't want to see the gallery until Daniel comes. We'll see it together."

DANIEL. Did Don Pablo hear that?

MARIANA. Of course; everybody heard it; and I said it just in order that he might hear it. And now are you going to complain and be jealous and say that I am wicked? Perhaps I am very wicked, but by and by I shall learn to love and be good.

DANIEL. Good! Why, you are an angel! I am quite confused; I never heard you say such things before.

MARIANA. Now, sir, don't make fun of my resolve. I'm not yet an angel, but I feel that I am growing better. I still have

sometimes attacks of anger—moments of indifference. Just now, before you came in, I felt something wicked stirring in my heart, as if a great black angel had got into a rage. But you arrived and I became calm again. You soothed me; there is no doubt of it. You exercise a beneficial influence over me. You throw around me an atmosphere of peace, of confidence, of sweetness —of what else?

DANIEL. Say of love—of deep, unalterable and eternal love.

MARIANA. Well, I will dare to say it, even if we make ourselves ridiculous. I say of deep, unalterable—what else was it?

DANIEL. And eternal love!

MARIANA. Well, eternal love, Daniel!

DANIEL. My God, what a happy day! I had a presentiment of it. When I left home the sun was shining in splendor—a wonderful day! I was walking very fast and a little girl came to me, begging alms. "Get out, get out!" I said. And then I remembered. No; the first time I saw Mariana I saw her giving alms to a little girl. "Come here!" I cried to her, and a crowd of children came, and I gave them all the change I had in my pockets. What blessings they wished me! And I have received those blessings, every one, in sweet words from my Mariana. If you

love me I shall become a saint!

MARIANA. Poor Daniel!

DANIEL. I am not a poor man now; I am immensely rich in hopes.

MARIANA. You see, I have never loved any one in the world except my mother, and nobody has loved me but her. And now it seems to me that you, too, love me with all your heart. And, of course, I have a heart also. I was alone in the world with my stubbornness and my pride and my skepticism, and without any deep affection. Then I came to know you, and what a battle took place within me! "He is like the others; he is not like them. He is an egoist and a hypocrite; he is not. It is not love; it's a mere caprice. It's not a caprice; it can't be." And I am becoming persuaded now that you are not like the others and that you are not deceiving me. You're not deceiving me, Daniel, when you say you love me so much, are you? (*In a tone of entreaty.*)

DANIEL. Deceiving you! My life is yours for the asking.

MARIANA. To ask for your life forever would mean, "Let us marry."

DANIEL. And what of it?

MARIANA. We must go more slowly. I am still rather diffident.

DANIEL. How sweet are the tones of your voice, Mariana! At last, at last, you are

my Mariana! Say that you are.

MARIANA. We are on the way. Let us climb to the very summit of the mountain.

DANIEL. I am on the summit calling to you, and you have only a very little farther to climb.

MARIANA. But that little is so hard.

DANIEL. I'll give you my hand.

MARIANA. You'll not complain about me today? And you won't be sad?

DANIEL. Today is the happiest day of my life!

MARIANA. It must be so for both of us. (*Looking to see if any one is coming.*)

DANIEL. Don't be afraid; they're not coming. They are engrossed in antiques.

MARIANA. And, even if they do come, what does it matter to me? I am free. I am most free because I can say to them: "My friends, I have lost my freedom." (*With affectionate coquetry.*)

DANIEL. When will you have enough courage—and pity to do that?

MARIANA. When? I don't know. It will come suddenly—perhaps in the next moment. It would be just like me to say to them: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have come to celebrate the opening of the Mexican gallery; I give you celebration for celebration. I announce to you that next month I shall begin my new life, and I invite you, one and all, to my wedding." Just like

that.

DANIEL (*between fear and hope*). Don't joke. You can't do it that way.

MARIANA. No? True; it would hardly be the conventional way, but I like unconventional things—improvisations, so to speak.

DANIEL. And, after all, what is there unconventional about it?

MARIANA. Even if there were, what of it? But, speaking seriously, it's too soon.

DANIEL. How unfortunate for me!

MARIANA. Don't be sad. (*Very affectionately.*) Be careful; I feel very weak and sensitive today, and if I see you with that long face I shall begin when you least expect it: "Ladies and gentlemen, we have come to celebrate the opening." (*Laughing.*) What foolishness!—or rather what an announcement of the foolishness that will soon take place. (*She continues laughing.*)

DANIEL. Mariana, what a power you have over me! With a single phrase you can lift me to the seventh heaven of bliss or cast me into the abyss of despair. And I never know where I am.

MARIANA. I don't know if it will be today or tomorrow, but either I'll have you as the partner of my life or I'll walk alone to the end.

DANIEL. Then be mine!

MARIANA. After all, why not?

DANIEL. Then say so.

MARIANA. Goodness me, how conquerors take advantage of their victories!

DANIEL. Mariana!

MARIANA. Hush!

(*Clara, Trinidad, Don Pablo, Don Castulo, Luciano and Don Joaquin enter; talk with great animation in small groups.*)

JOAQUIN. Very curious, very curious.

PABLO. I am not a connoisseur, but I recognize the great value of these objects.

CASTULO. Value? Just ask Luciano.

LUCIANO. This house contains things of the greatest value.

CASTULO (*referring to Luciano*). And *he* ought to know.

TRINIDAD. What I liked best was that earring that Don Castulo described to us.

CLARA (*to Mariana*). Now that Daniel is here you must go to see it.

TRINIDAD. Oh, yes, Mariana; you will surely like it.

JOAQUIN. Take her to see it, Daniel.

DANIEL. I am at her disposal.

MARIANA (*to Daniel*). Do you want to? Well, let's go. You must come also, Don Castulo.

CASTULO. Of course. You will see, Daniel. You are a connoisseur, but I wager you've never seen the equal of this.

DANIEL. What is it?

MARIANA (*with great kindness and even familiarity in her voice*). A very curious thing, Daniel.

CASTULO. I explained it before: a golden ring with three pendants, each composed of a little chain and a little winged figure.

DANIEL (*laughing*). Oh, yes, I know; and with their hands on their mouths. You can't tell whether they're sending a kiss or imposing silence.

CASTULO. Just so. But you know then?

DANIEL (*in a tone of triumph*). What did you think? You mean what are called the only two Mexican earrings in the whole world of archæology.

MARIANA. So you know them? How learned Daniel is! Don Castulo, what did you think?

CASTULO (*with coldness and humiliation*). It's true, there are two, but I have only one.

DANIEL (*laughing*). Of course.

CASTULO. So you have seen them?

DANIEL. Many times.

CASTULO (*disdainfully*). An illustration in a book or a cast of them?

DANIEL. No, *the other one,* the *double* of the one you own.

MARIANA (*astonished*). How? You? What?

CASTULO (*disdainfully*). Well, maybe you have seen, but you don't own it.

DANIEL. Almost—almost the same (*gayly, with an air of happy triumph.*) Do you hear, Mariana? How conceited scientists are! He thought he was the only one.

MARIANA (*to Daniel*). I don't understand. You said—go on— (*The by-play in this following scene is left to the discretion of the actress, so directions are suppressed.*)

TRINIDAD. Let me see, how is that?

LUCIANO. Things always turn out queerly in this house. Don't you think so, Don Pablo?

PABLO. Yes, I do.

JOAQUIN. We'll see.

DANIEL. There's no mystery about it. If that object in your possession is really what you suppose it to be, and not an imitation—

CASTULO. What? An imitation!

MARIANA. It may be.

CASTULO. Nothing of the kind. It's genuine. I have a legal contract, seven witnesses, a certificate from the consul at Tehuantepec—and that counts for something. What! An imitation! What do you think of that, Luciano?

LUCIANO. I am astonished, Don Castulo.

CASTULO. An imitation!

DANIEL. Don't be alarmed; maybe the earring is genuine. But, if it is, its mate is practically mine, because my father was

the man who conducted the excavations, and since then it has been at his museum.

MARIANA. Daniel! Daniel! No, no! It's not true!

JOAQUIN (*restraining her*). Mariana!

DANIEL (*to Mariana*). What an interest you take in these things! It makes me laugh.

MARIANA. Me, too. (*Laughing nervously.*) You don't understand, Daniel, but it's not possible. Ha! ha! ha! How terrible that would be, Don Joaquin!

CASTULO. But I repeat it, the man who gave me this relic from a Tehuantepec grave was an American.

DANIEL. That's right; it was my father.

CASTULO. No; it was not Senor Montaya.

MARIANA. Don't be stubborn, Daniel; it was not Senor Montaya. (*Violently.*) What a man! No, Daniel (*approaching him tenderly*), no, it wasn't your father, was it?

DANIEL. Why?

CASTULO. Because the South American's name was Felix de Alvarado.

DANIEL. And what of it? My father, in his political adventures, when he was in a secret mission or travelling through Europe, very often—

MARIANA. Did he change his name?

DANIEL. Exactly—the ordinary precau-

tions of a conspirator. In America his name was Enrique Montaya; in Spain, Felix de Alvarado, Mariana.

MARIANA. So there is no hope?

DANIEL. Hope? Of what?

MARIANA. Of Don Castulo's completing his set of earrings. Your father will never let so precious an object go.

DANIEL. On the contrary. As you are so interested in such things (*to Mariana*) in order to please Don Castulo, and so that you may see both the earrings together (*to Castulo*), you can count upon having the other one. Are you glad?

CASTULO. Montaya! Montaya! You are a man of true feeling! (*He embraces him. Daniel laughs gayly*). Today I invite you all to another dinner to celebrate the final union of the two Mexican earrings. Love united them in the depths of a grave; Montaya separated them; I shall unite them again.

MARIANA. How poetic, Don Castulo! Poetry is contagious. And I am just thinking—may I say?

JOAQUIN (*aside to Mariana*). Mariana, what are you going to do?

MARIANA (*aside to Joaquin*). Raise a wall at once between this man and myself.

JOAQUIN. Why?

MARIANA. Because I love him. I am so vile as to love him still. (*Aloud.*) Well, I'll tell you. On that festival day we'll celebrate another union—another couple. How strange life is, Daniel!

TRINIDAD. Another union?

CLARA. Which?

MARIANA. That's a secret. (*Aside to Don Pablo.*) Don Pablo, I accept your proposal.

PABLO (*aside to Mariana*). My wife?

MARIANA. Yes.

PABLO. You make me the happiest man in the world. (*He kisses her hand.*)

CLARA. What about us?

LUCIANO. This won't do. No secrets allowed today.

DANIEL. It would be cruelty. For God's sake—for the sake of what you care for or did care for most in life—I implore you!

MARIANA. I cared for my mother more than for anything else.

DANIEL. Then for your mother's sake.

MARIANA (*after a pause*). Then for her sake I announce to you, my good friends, that I shall become Don Pablo Arteaga's wife.

DANIEL. What! What did she say? Mariana his wife!

MARIANA. Yes, his wife.

DANIEL. It's not true, Mariana! And if it is—it's infamous!

PABLO. Senor Montaya, I take upon myself this insult to Mariana, and I shall punish it.

DANIEL. In you I'll punish both her treason and your mockery. I swear it by my father's name!

MARIANA. Which one—Montaya or Alvarado?

DANIEL. Montaya.

PABLO. Enough!

MARIANA (*aside*). Oh, my Daniel! my Daniel!

DANIEL. Oh, the vileness of these two! There is no consideration that could restrain me.

JOAQUIN. For God's sake.

CLARA. Daniel!

CASTULO. Be wise!

LUCIANO. Be prudent!

TRINIDAD. That's too much.

MARIANA (*aside*). Mother! My darling mother! I can do no more for your sake!

DANIEL. (*Final grouping must be carefully studied.*) Ah, she, she! Yes, I see it as clear as sunlight. She played with my heart, she tortured my soul, she maddened my brain! She is infamous! (*To Don Pablo.*) You are infamous! Let me

go! Let me go, or I will not be responsible for my acts. Mariana! Mariana! You shall remember me—yes, you shall remember! Ah, this man and woman shall have cause to remember Daniel Montaya!

CURTAIN.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

CHARACTERS.

MARIANA.
DANIEL.
DON PABLO.
DON JOAQUIN.
DON CASTULO.
LUCIANO.
FELIPE, *Valet.*
CLAUDIA, *Chambermaid.*

The scene represents a ground floor parlor at Mariana's country house at La Granja. To the rear a big door leading over a terrace; at both sides large windows. Further on the terrace and the garden trees are seen. Lower R. and L. two small doors leading to private rooms. Upper R. and L. two larger doors, the left one entering into Mariana's apartments, the right into Don Pablo's. The parlor is furnished luxuriously and with elegance. It is night. Some lights on the tables. A clear, blue sky. The moon shines at appropriate moments, flooding the

rear of the stage with light. At times it is obscured by clouds. CLAUDIA, *the chambermaid, and* FELIPE, *a valet, are going around the room arranging things, putting flowers in vases, etc.*

FELIPE. Is everything all right?

CLAUDIA. Surely.

FELIPE. The bride and bridegroom will arrive soon, and they'll want everything to be ready. And that's a fact.

CLAUDIA. Let them come. But they won't be bride and bridegroom any more; they'll be husband and wife.

FELIPE. They're bride and bridegroom, I tell you.

CLAUDIA. They were to be married in Madrid at eight o'clock, then they were to take a special train, ordered by the senora, that will bring them to La Granja at a great speed. It's about midnight now, so they've been husband and wife for three whole hours.

FELIPE. Bride and bridegroom for three hours, and that's a fact.

CLAUDIA. Pig-headed!

FELIPE. I'm a thoughtful man, and that's a fact.

CLAUDIA. You're an awful bore of a man, and that's a fact. (*Imitating him.*)

FELIPE. Did you put flowers in the senora's rooms?

CLAUDIA. I did. And it looks like a garden now. I put some in the senor's rooms, too, and that looks like a garden, too.

FELIPE. Flowers in a soldier's room! You are not a thoughtful woman.

CLAUDIA. Why?

FELIPE. Giving flowers to a soldier like Don Pablo, who, they say, is a greater soldier than St. James; with all his scars and so much gold embroidery on his coat; a man who is supposed to have killed I don't know how many people.

CLAUDIA. Supposed to have killed—I guess that's about it. There are lots of his kind going round pretending to kill people for trifles, but there aren't enough corpses strewn along their path to worry a one-horse undertaker. As for Don Pablo —well, he had a duel before his marriage, and he was pricked—he was pricked by Don Daniel. There's a man for you—Don Daniel! He's wounded more hearts with his soft, brown eyes than Don Pablo with all his swords and pistols put together. I know him, you know. And he certainly gave Don Pablo a pretty scratch.

FELIPE. Really?

CLAUDIA. Yes; I heard it in Madrid.

FELIPE. Well, my dear, such is life. He who trifles with pointed steel sooner or later will get pricked, and that's a fact. What was the cause?

CLAUDIA. I don't know. Don Pablo and Don Daniel had a quarrel, and as they were both so brave, you see—but Don Daniel was the braver.

FELIPE. Maybe it was on account of Senora Mariana.

CLAUDIA. Maybe. She's certainly a beauty. And what is a man good for but to be killed for the sake of some pretty girl?

FELIPE. And as she's so rich, so rich! What are men good for but to look out for a rainy day? And that's a fact.

CLAUDIA. Well, that's all right as far as her husband is concerned, but, as for Don Daniel, he doesn't have to envy anybody so far as family, money or courage goes. What are you laughing at, you old fool?

FELIPE. Because I know all that, and more; I know how they fought, and why, and what was the result.

CLAUDIA. Oh, you—aren't you sly? What were you playing innocent for?

FELIPE. Just to find out if you knew anything I didn't. But I guess I know more than you.

CLAUDIA. Well, tell me.

FELIPE. There was a duel, but Don Daniel didn't wound him; that's not a fact.

CLAUDIA. Yes, he did.

FELIPE. No, I tell you. Don Daniel, as he was the younger and very angry, he

went at it with a rush and he disarmed Don Pablo three times, and that's a fact.

CLAUDIA. Aha! Do you know Don Daniel?

FELIPE. Only by name; I've never seen him.

CLAUDIA. And then? Go on.

FELIPE. Then Don Pablo got angry, too. You know a man will get angry if he gets the chance—that is, if he's not a thoughtful man like me. And Don Pablo cried: "Younger than me? Stronger than me?" It seems that Don Daniel has a very strong arm.

CLAUDIA. Of course. And then?

FELIPE. Then Don Daniel cried: "Let's try our skill at shooting." And Don Pablo was the best shot and sent a bullet into his chest. The young man had a strong arm, and that's a fact, but the old one was a better shot, and that's a fact, too.

CLAUDIA. And Don Daniel died? What a pity!

FELIPE. No, he didn't die, but he was very ill, and he is still in bed.

CLAUDIA. But will he die?

FELIPE. Oh, no; he'll pull through all right, don't worry.

CLAUDIA. And Don Pablo didn't get hurt?

FELIPE. Well, he was hit by a bullet, but it struck against one of his ribs and so it was turned aside. Old men's bones are

very hard, and that's a fact.

CLAUDIA. So he is really an old man?

FELIPE. Not really decrepit; he's well preserved, stands erect and looks strong and brave. But he's not in the prime of life.

CLAUDIA. How old is he?

FELIPE. Somewhere around fifty.

CLAUDIA. Gracious! And Senora Mariana gave up Daniel to marry that bundle of old bones! What good taste ladies have nowadays! I'll take away the flowers from his room. I'll look for some tonic and put it in his room instead, with a cup of broth, a glass of sherry and a foot warmer. Otherwise he might die from the effect of the journey.

FELIPE. I'll bring a foot warmer. After traveling, you know, it's a great comfort, and that's a fact.

CLAUDIA. I'm anxious to see the old rascal. Does he wear a wig?

FELIPE. I don't know. I asked the servants about him this morning and they told me what I've told you, but they didn't say anything about the wig. But you'll see him pretty soon. The carriages went to the station a good while ago.

CLAUDIA. So there are a lot of people coming?

FELIPE. There are some people coming —not many.

CLAUDIA. And they'll all sleep here? Goodness! They didn't tell me.

FELIPE. Don't worry. Only the bride and bridegroom will sleep here. All the other people will be accommodated at Don Joaquin's country home.

CLAUDIA. Oh, yes, I know; the house he built near here in order to be able to keep an eye on Mariana.

FELIPE. Right you are. And— Look! I guess they're coming. Don't you hear a noise like carriages?

CLAUDIA. Yes. (*She goes to the small door at the left.*)

FELIPE. Where are you going?

CLAUDIA. To look through the window of the boudoir to see if the carriages are coming.

FELIPE. You can't get in.

CLAUDIA. I can't get in the senora's rooms?

FELIPE. No.

CLAUDIA. Why not, you booby?

FELIPE. Because the key is lost.

CLAUDIA. Lost?

FELIPE. It's been taken away.

CLAUDIA. By whom?

FELIPE. By the devil, who takes every key.

CLAUDIA. What's that?

FELIPE. This afternoon a gentleman came—a finely dressed, handsome man. He

said he was a newspaper man—you know, one of those people who have got to see everything so they can write it up in the papers. As there was so much talk about the wedding and the house being so handsome—

CLAUDIA. He wanted to see it?

FELIPE. And he saw it, and everything he saw will be described in the papers. That's nice for the senora and for us. But—

CLAUDIA. What?

FELIPE. On leaving the boudoir, without thinking—I suppose it was without thinking—he took the key with him.

CLAUDIA. But now, if the senora wants to get in?

FELIPE. I'll jump through the open window and open the door. That's a fact.

CLAUDIA. You always have to do something wrong.

FELIPE. Shut up! Here they are.

(*Don Castulo and Luciano come by rear entrance.*)

SERVANT. Please step in. (*He withdraws.*)

LUCIANO. This must be a beautiful house.

CASTULO. They say so; it is famous. Great luxury! Modern industry, modern art—everything modern; but it's famous in spite of it's being modern.

FELIPE. Please pardon us. Are the other

gentlemen coming?

LUCIANO. They will be here in five minutes.

FELIPE. So, if you don't wish anything we'll go wait for the other gentlemen, with your permission.

LUCIANO. You may go.

CASTULO (*examining everything carefully*). Just what I told you—much luxury and display. A real palace—almost a royal palace, but not a single object worthy the attention of such men as we are. Modernism, pure modernism. (*With disdain.*) There is nothing evidencing any personality, nothing sixty years old—not even fifty.

LUCIANO. But you are that old yourself, and you are here.

CASTULO. Don't talk to me of persons; they are never more than a hundred years old. The most respectable things in the way of persons are mummies. The smallest mummy is worth more in this respect than any living human being. Take, for instance, horseshoes. Well, archæologically speaking, they are wonderful. If it would not seem immodest, I should say that I have horseshoes from Pegasus to Don Quixote's horse, Rosinante; from Faraonic, Persian and Tartarian horseshoes down to the horseshoes of Cromwell; from Atilla's horseshoes, which killed the grass under them, to Napoleon's, which left their bloody

prints on two continents. When I say Atilla's and Napoleon's horseshoes, I mean those of their horses.

LUCIANO. Of course.

CASTULO. If you could see my collection —what precious horseshoes! I offer them to you—

LUCIANO. Don Castulo!

CASTULO. Let me finish. I offer them to you to look at and you can read history as well as in Tacitus or Cæsar. It's wonderful! Take an Arab horse: turn up its legs, examine its hoofs, and you have the Arab architecture, which is nothing but a horseshoe arch.

LUCIANO (*trying to change the subject*). I am surprised that the newly wed couple are late. And, while we are talking of them, don't you think they have made a great mistake, binding themselves together by the ties of matrimony?

CASTULO. I don't know; I don't worry about such things.

LUCIANO. Didn't you notice Mariana? What a ghostly pallor! How forced her smile was! How nervous she seemed!

CASTULO. I didn't notice any of that. My mind was soaring to other worlds.

LUCIANO. She nearly fainted after the ceremony, and during the journey here—sepulchral silence!

CASTULO. Wedding day emotions. I was

very wrought up myself when I married Clarita.

LUCIANO. I suppose so.

CASTULO. Yes, indeed; I was so wrought up on that day that I broke an Etruscan jar. Irreparable loss, my dear Luciano.

LUCIANO. I think they have arrived.

CASTULO. I suppose they have. In order to arrive at a place there's nothing better than to travel toward it; sooner or later you will arrive.

(*Mariana, Don Pablo and Don Joaquin come by the back. Mariana is pale and sullen. She walks with some difficulty, leaning on Don Joaquin's arm. After taking her hat off, she drops into an armchair.*)

JOAQUIN. Sit down and rest; you are not well.

PABLO. How do you feel?

MARIANA. Quite well. There's nothing the matter with me. For heaven's sake, am I a child?

JOAQUIN. You are very pale.

PABLO. Very pale.

MARIANA. There were so many people. And the welcomes, the greetings, the social impertinences—to have to answer to everybody. Smiles, polite phrases—these eternal commonplaces have worn me out and my nerves can't stand any more. It's the necessary commonplaces of life that wear one

out and make one nervous. (*Trying to smile.*) And in my case it's nothing more.

PABLO. So you are better?

MARIANA (*with scarcely restrained impatience*). Surely. It's nothing, I tell you.

JOAQUIN. But you weren't feeling well on the trip. Once or twice I feared you were going to faint.

LUCIANO. I noticed it, too.

CASTULO. I didn't.

MARIANA. The train was running so rapidly that I felt—I don't know what, and I shut my eyes and let it carry me away. We ride on the train of our own free will, don't we? Then there's nothing to do but to shut one's eyes and be carried away. Life is so! (*To Pablo.*) Don't be alarmed; I'm all right. And I'm glad I'm home—in our home, away from inconsiderate people and friends. Oh, I'm not saying this for you (*to Castulo and Luciano*), nor for you, my father (*to Don Joaquin*).

CASTULO. We'll also withdraw. Discretion and friendship are not two mutually exclusive terms.

LUCIANO. Neither are discretion and archæology.

CASTULO. Archæology is discretion itself; it says everything through silence.

MARIANA. I like it just for that—silence. How eloquent silence is, isn't it? (*To Pablo.*)

PABLO. It's my only eloquence.

CASTULO. Well, we'll retire.

LUCIANO. Don Joaquin's house is waiting for us.

MARIANA. Not yet, please. (*Trying to smile.*) You must see the house. The country people, with their exaggerated ways of speaking, call it "the palace." It's not so grand as all that, but the view from the roof on a moonlight night like tonight is really delightful. Go up. For people of imagination like you it's a wonderful sight.

LUCIANO. But if we are intruding—

MARIANA. Not at all. It takes only ten minutes. I shall keep you ten minutes longer. Pablo, please take them up. As the master of the house you must do the honors. I'll rest a little in the meanwhile. (*She says all this in a clear voice, with some irony and profound sadness. She is always the true lady who knows how to restrain herself and pay due tribute to social requirements.*)

PABLO. Let's go up.

CASTULO. We are yours to command.

MARIANA (*to Don Joaquin*). You know the house already; you can stay here.

JOAQUIN. As you wish.

PABLO. I'll go first to show you the way.

LUCIANO. Everything is really charming.

CASTULO. It's not bad, but it will look better in five hundred years. (*They go out by upper R.*)

JOAQUIN. What's the matter, Mariana?

MARIANA. The whole earth is made of lead and is pressing upon my heart. I can't stand it any longer, Don Joaquin—I can't, my father!

JOAQUIN (*softly, as he approaches her*). O, will of iron! You repent now when it's too late.

MARIANA. Repent! No. What I have done is well done, and unless I were the most degraded woman in the world I could not have done otherwise. It was not folly; it was sincere wisdom and my deserved punishment.

JOAQUIN. Oh, stubborn and blind woman!

MARIANA. No, Don Joaquin; it was not blindness; it was not obstinacy. I wanted to raise a barrier between Daniel and myself; I wanted to have at my side a man who would hold my madness in check with a hand of iron—an implacable man, that when I go to Daniel—because I know myself that if he doesn't come to me I shall go to him—then, when that happens, let Don Pablo kill us both; and perhaps, just in order to save Daniel, I'll have the strength to resist the impulses of my desire.

JOAQUIN. You haven't convinced me, but

at any rate it's done now and can't be helped.

MARIANA. I haven't convinced you? But you don't realize all that I thought, all that I suffered on that day. So, I said to myself, the only man for whom I have ever felt any love turns out to be Alvarado's son. I am infatuated with the son of that wretch who dishonored, tortured and finally killed my mother. What is my conscience then? What manner of woman am I? Of what vile substance am I made?

JOAQUIN. These are exaggerations. When you became infatuated with Daniel you were ignorant of all this.

MARIANA. But I found it out afterwards, and yet I continued to love him. Now I know it, too, and my heart longs for my Daniel!

JOAQUIN. Silence, silence! Don't say such things—no more, no more!

MARIANA. Isn't all this monstrous? That accursed family has been the damnation of mine. His father made my mother vile, and Daniel has made me vile. What infamy! What infamy! God! God!

JOAQUIN. My dear, God has ordained it so. The sins of the fathers descend upon the children.

MARIANA. But he is innocent! Why must he pay for his father's crimes?

JOAQUIN. Don't drive me crazy! You

ought to have thought of that before and married Daniel.

MARIANA. That, never! You are too pure and too noble-hearted to believe what you are saying. I, his wife! I bound forever to Alvarado's son! And we two, on the wedding day, going to receive a blessing and a kiss from that man! Those lips that profaned the mother's, kissing with mock holiness the daughter's forehead! And afterwards, when Daniel would speak to me of his love, to be always thinking that these were perhaps the very same words with which his father drove my poor, martyred mother mad! With the same steady voice, the same tenderness, the same passionate transports! So, so, that man dishonored the mother that I revere! Daniel's blood, his smile, the light of his eyes, the warmth of his hands, his sweet words —all come from *him!* The daughter enjoying what is left of the impurities that ruined her mother! No, no, no! Anything rather than that eternal, unbearable torture! And a woman who, in spite of all this, still loves Alvarado's son—for I love him!—such a woman must become Don Pablo's wife. For impurity, a chilling, restraining will of iron; for insanity, a straitjacket; for the beast without feelings, a pitiless tamer!

JOAQUIN. Well, you have got just what

you were looking for. When Don Pablo found cause to mistrust his first wife—

MARIANA. What?

JOAQUIN. Cold, determined, implacable, with no outcry, no reproach, no menaces—

MARIANA. What?

JOAQUIN. Some people say, or at least suspect, that he could kill in cold blood with a single blow.

MARIANA. Do you think he has forgotten how to do that?

JOAQUIN. I don't think so.

MARIANA. So much the better.

JOAQUIN. Hush! They are coming. (*Approaching the door.*)

MARIANA. Let us conceal our feelings. (*The others enter.*)

LUCIANO. Admirable, Mariana. An enchanted palace!

MARIANA. Really?

CASTULO. Really some fine things. Of course, I am speaking as an archæologist. Those enamels—fine, fine! And that carved silver plate, we would steal it with pleasure, wouldn't we, Luciano?

LUCIANO. I wouldn't steal anything, Don Castulo.

CASTULO. You wouldn't steal anything from me—really?

LUCIANO (*ironically*). Maybe.

CASTULO (*tapping him on the shoulder*). I knew it.

PABLO (*to Mariana*). How are you now?

MARIANA. Still train sick. I'm afraid I am going to get a bad headache.

JOAQUIN. Go and rest then, dear.

LUCIANO. With your permission, we'll withdraw. Don Joaquin's house is waiting for us, and the carriage, too.

CASTULO. Mariana, I am your sincere friend, and my friend's happiness—in spite of the fact that it is something which I can't put into my museum—is yet a source of real pleasure to me.

MARIANA. Thank you, Don Castulo. I have memories of your museum which will not be easily eradicated, believe me.

CASTULO. Thank you very much, Mariana. Good-by, Don Pablo. I'm your sincere friend, and my friend's happiness, in spite of the fact— (*Luciano interrupts and separates the two, laughing. Don Pablo and Don Castulo go toward the terrace, whispering compliments.*)

LUCIANO. All right! All right! Good-by, Mariana; I'm always your friend.

MARIANA. Good-by, Luciano. (*They shake hands.*)

JOAQUIN. Courage!

MARIANA. I don't lack courage; it's happiness that I lack.

JOAQUIN. Good-by.

MARIANA. Good-by. (*The four men shake hands on the terrace, where they are seen*

for a few moments.) I'll go to my room— (*Stopping.*) No, he would come in. Into my drawing room— (*She goes toward the door, but changes her mind.*) What for? (*Looking outside to see if they are going.*) To my room; I'll lock the door. No, I'll stay here. (*She drops into an armchair.*) They are leaving. They've gone. He is coming back. What does it matter?

(*Pablo enters.*)

PABLO. Are you better?

MARIANA. No; I feel as if there were an iron band drawn tightly around my head. It is like red hot iron; it presses and burns. It's pleasant.

PABLO (*tenderly*). Poor Mariana!

MARIANA. Have they gone?

PABLO (*approaching her*). Yes.

MARIANA (*to say something*). So, they have gone.

PABLO. And they have left us alone. (*He sits down by her side.*)

MARIANA. Will you close that door? Pardon me. (*She points to the door at the rear.*)

PABLO. Of course. (*He closes the door.*) Did the night air annoy you?

MARIANA. Everything annoys me to-night.

PABLO. I also?

MARIANA. What a question!

PABLO. Don't you want to talk?

MARIANA. You may talk, but pardon me if my answers are rather brief. Each word that I speak reverberates through my head like a hammer blow in an empty house.

PABLO. You said "your answers." Did you think I was going to ask you questions?

MARIANA. I said that without thinking. You must realize that I'm in no condition for talking, much less for discussing.

PABLO. Then I won't talk either.

MARIANA. As you like. Silence is the only thing that helps me.

PABLO. Silence and *solitude,* isn't that right—solitude and silence?

MARIANA. They are both good companions, but I didn't mean so much as that.

PABLO (*taking her hand*). Poor Mariana! Your hand is like ice.

MARIANA. Didn't I tell you? I don't feel well. Let it go. Forgive me. (*Withdrawing her hand.*) I want to see if it will get warmer. (*She covers her hands and sinks lower into her armchair to escape from Don Pablo.*)

PABLO (*seeing that she closes her eyes and drops her head*). Are you sleepy?

MARIANA. A little. You see, I think that sleep would help me.

PABLO. Well, sleep awhile; maybe it will help you. I'll watch you from this armchair.

MARIANA. No; a little while won't be long enough; I must have a long sleep—very long. For great suffering there is nothing like a long, unbroken sleep.

PABLO. Poor Mariana! You women are very weak.

MARIANA. Yes, and I more than any other.

PABLO. For that very reason you need a husband—a man who loves you with all his heart, but who leads you with a strong hand, because very often your pains are only pure fancy. "I'm sick, I'm sick!" you say, in a weak, pleading voice, as you said it just now, but if an affectionate and yet energetic voice tells you, "You are not sick; I don't want you to be sick," oh, miracle of love! you become well again. Isn't that so? (*He says all this as if joking, but it is plain that he is trying to restrain himself, and his tone is rather hard and dominating.*)

MARIANA (*coldly*). No, it's not so; I really feel badly tonight; and, even if you said to me with all possible affection and energy, "Don't be sick; I don't want you to be sick," I should continue to be sick in spite of your orders. (*With an ironic smile.*)

PABLO. I don't order, Mariana; I just beg.

MARIANA. I dare say, and I'm obliged

to you for that. It's a little too soon for orders. But, do you see, I spoke a little, and the pain has increased till it is unbearable. (*Pressing her head.*)

PABLO (*nearly exploding*). Anyhow—

MARIANA (*with dignity and haughtiness*). What?

PABLO. I don't insist. Let us see if, with silence, rest and sleep, your pain will go away.

MARIANA. Thanks.

PABLO. Do you want me to take you to your room?

MARIANA. No—pardon me; I'll doze here for a while.

PABLO (*after a pause, during which he contemplates her silently*). Good-by, Mariana. Sleep, rest. I'm not a tyrant. You want to be alone and I'll leave you.

MARIANA. I'm grateful to you, Pablo. Good-by.

PABLO. Won't you give me your hand?

MARIANA. Why shouldn't I?

PABLO. It is burning up now.

MARIANA. Is it, really? (*Withdraws her hand.*) I think you're right.

PABLO. Until tomorrow. (*Goes toward his room.*) (*At the door of his room, without entering*). She has a character of iron. So much the better.

MARIANA. I think he is going at last. He will leave me alone. He expects to tame

me. It's not so easy.

(*Don Pablo gazes at her from his door. Mariana turns her head to see if he has gone. Noticing this, Don Pablo returns.*)

PABLO (*in a hard, decided tone*). Pardon me; one word more.

MARIANA (*with an ennui that she does not attempt to conceal*). More?

PABLO. A short word. I know that you married me without loving me, but I don't know why you did that. I knew that you were an honorable woman, and that was enough for me. You don't love me today. Never mind. Love is all powerful. Mine shall prove so. I wanted you to be mine; you are mine now. There's time left for finding out other things. I'm that way. When I want a thing I get it. Life—what is life? A means, only a means for the triumph of the will. My will has triumphed. The first time I saw you I thought that woman shall be either mine or nobody's. To you I appeared always cold. If you could have put your hand into my heart you would have withdrawn it scorched with the fire raging there. Today you want me to be cold again, and I wrap myself in ice. I ask nothing today. Sleep, rest in peace. You shall answer me tomorrow.

MARIANA. Answer? To what question?

PABLO. To this one: "Why did you mar-

ry me?'' I'll wait till tomorrow.

MARIANA. I can answer that right away.

PABLO. Do, then.

MARIANA. You mentioned the reason before. We women are weak. I wanted to have a strong personality by my side to compel me to follow the only possible path.

PABLO. You mean the path of honor?

MARIANA. Of course.

PABLO. You will surely follow it, and without my help, I think.

MARIANA. And if I should need your help?

PABLO. It will not be wanting.

MARIANA. In any shape?

PABLO. In any shape.

MARIANA. Even in the shape of punishment and vengeance?

PABLO (*going toward her*). Mariana!

MARIANA. Answer. It is my turn to ask questions.

PABLO (*in agitation*). Even that?

MARIANA. Really? And what if you didn't dare?

PABLO. Don't put me to the test.

MARIANA. If occasion arises I will.

PABLO (*approaching her and taking her hand*). You have fever. You must rest.

MARIANA. Tomorrow I'll ask for a complete explanation.

PABLO. I'll be yours to command.

MARIANA. Good-by.

PABLO. Good-by. (*Aside.*) Ah, Mariana, you don't know me.

MARIANA. I'll know tomorrow what this man is. (*Listening.*) Yes, he has gone into his room. Ah! I can breathe now. When he is by me, I feel as though I should suffocate. I am ready to suffer, but in the open air, so that the pain may have a chance to escape. Repressed pain is not to be endured. It condenses here and drives you insane. (*Pressing her head.*) It condenses here and breaks your heart. (*Pressing her hand on her heart.*) I am quieter now. (*She looks out of a window.*) How beautiful the night is and how clear! How the moon shines! (*She rings and Claudia appears by left with a lighted candle.*) Tell them to come and put the lights out; that candle that you have is enough for me. (*She takes it and puts it on a table. Then she takes off her coat and throws it on a sofa.*)

CLAUDIA. Yes, senora. (*She goes out for a moment and returns with two servants.*)

MARIANA (*walking about nervously*). People irritate me and light and noise and everything irritates me. You can go to bed. (*To Claudia.*) I'll undress myself.

CLAUDIA. If you order it so.

MARIANA. Yes, do, and tell my maid to do the same.

CLAUDIA. Yes, senora. Good night, senora.

MARIANA. Good night. (*Claudia goes to close the windows at the back.*) Don't close those windows; they are all right as they are.

CLAUDIA. Very well, senora. (*She goes. Meanwhile the servants have taken the other lights.*)

MARIANA. So, all the world is far from me. Alone and thinking of him! (*She goes to the table and puts out the candle. The parlor is dark save for the moonlight. The front of the stage in shadow.*) He—my eternal companion! (*She pauses.*) Is he thinking of me? Of course. For Daniel there is but one single idea—Mariana and Mariana's dreadful treason. Poor Daniel! Let him suffer and suffer, if he suffers for my sake. Let him never be consoled. Oh, that would be real treason! What's that noise? (*Pausing.*) Is Pablo coming back? (*She goes to Don Pablo's door and listens. Meanwhile the door of her boudoir opens and Daniel looks out from behind the curtains. He is bareheaded and his clothes are disarranged, for he has climbed through the window. He watches Mariana while she listens at Don Pablo's door.*) I don't hear anything. He is thinking of what to say to me tomorrow and how he can tame me. (*She laughs, scarcely re-*

straining herself.)

DANIEL. Miserable woman! She laughs and is happy! Well, I'm happy, too!

MARIANA (*listening again*). Everything is quiet. I suppose he has locked himself in. I'll go to my room. (*She walks slowly across the stage.*) And my Daniel with me—always with his Mariana, always! (*She raises the curtain and Daniel comes out.*) Ah, a man! What? Who is it? (*Starting back, frightened.*)

DANIEL (*following her*). You don't know me any more.

MARIANA. Daniel! No; it's false! Daniel! (*The scene is lighted only by moonlight through the open windows.*)

DANIEL. Don't run away! There! Quiet, silence! (*He reaches her and seizes her.*)

MARIANA. Daniel! It's impossible! It's a dream! Leave me, leave me, Daniel! My God!

DANIEL. Keep quiet, keep quiet! What! Did you think that I would be missing on your wedding day?

MARIANA. But it's really you! It's you!

DANIEL. You didn't expect me, did you?

MARIANA. It's my Daniel, my Daniel! It seems impossible to me! (*Embracing him.*)

DANIEL. Does my presence make you glad?

MARIANA. You don't know how glad!

(*With passion.*) It was necessary!

DANIEL. But what kind of a woman are you?

MARIANA. I am Mariana. (*Childishly.*) It's you who don't know *me* now.

DANIEL. I don't know you. I'm going crazy! She looks at me lovingly. She almost suffocates me in her arms. Is this world composed of a pack of madmen? What is this woman? Let me see, let me see. Come here into the light; I want to see you. (*He takes her into the moonlight.*)

MARIANA. Yes, look at me, look at me! And let me see you also! Now, now, we have seen each other! My heart has won happiness for a long time! Now go away! Go! Hurry!

DANIEL. Ah, it's plain! All those kind words were just to make me go. I'm like the child to whom you give a toy, saying to him, "Go out! Don't trouble us. Take a smile with you, a loving word, and go! You are bothering me." But I'm not going! It worked all right before, but this time I'm not going! (*Fiercely.*)

MARIANA. I want you to go—I order you! It's necessary. Go!

DANIEL. No, no; I say I don't want to go. I am the master here now. (*Shaking her brutally.*)

MARIANA. Leave me! If you don't go

I'll call.

DANIEL. To your husband?

MARIANA. To Pablo.

DANIEL. Where is he?

MARIANA (*pointing to Don Pablo's room*). There.

DANIEL. Did he get tired of his wife so soon and run away?

MARIANA. You fool! Don't you understand what I have suffered today, till I thought I was going mad? I was almost senseless when I came here. I was sick; I begged him to leave me, and he went to his room. Not everybody is as cruel as you are.

DANIEL (*with joyful amazement*). You *did* suffer today?

MARIANA. Yes, more than you. You thought there was no pain in the world more unbearable than yours, but there is—mine!

DANIEL. So, you don't love him?

MARIANA. Love him—that man! Poor Daniel!

DANIEL. Then it's I that you love?

MARIANA. And if I answer that question will you go?

DANIEL. Yes.

MARIANA. Swear it?

DANIEL. I swear it!

MARIANA. Listen, then. There is only one man I love—you, Daniel—Daniel, my

soul!—all my life, only you!

DANIEL. Mariana, but all this is not a joke? You're not making fun of me?

MARIANA. Making fun of you? No. I loved you! I love you! I shall always love you! I swear it by the memory of my mother! Let that man come and kill us both if I am lying to you. You will not believe me, but God knows it—God believes me. Go, Daniel, go! Pity me, and don't forget me.

DANIEL. The explanation of all this? Quickly! Quickly!

MARIANA. Never! That's my secret.

DANIEL. No! I know you! You are tricking me again. Speak, speak!

MARIANA. Go!

DANIEL. No!

MARIANA. You swore it!

DANIEL. What do I care for my oath? Just as much as you care for yours.

MARIANA. Don't drive me insane! Go, or I'll call.

DANIEL. Well, I'll go. (*Runs to rear of stage and opens door.*)

MARIANA. What are you doing?

DANIEL. Clearing the way.

MARIANA. For what?

DANIEL. For my escape from here. I'll keep my word—I'll go. But not alone—with you!

MARIANA. No, not that!

DANIEL. Together—forever! I broke open the gate in the fence. A carriage is waiting for us, and we'll go away in it!

MARIANA (*stepping back*). Where?

DANIEL. I don't know—anywhere—wherever you like—wherever you can love me in peace, hate me, deceive me—what you will, but together!

MARIANA. No, I say no! (*Running from him.*)

DANIEL. Yes, I say yes! (*Reaching her.*)

MARIANA. Leave me alone! You have it in your blood—this vileness.

DANIEL (*taking her by force*). If you compel me to be vile, I'll be vile.

MARIANA. Let me go! Let me go! I despise you!—I hate you! You vile scoundrel! No, no; you shall never do with me as Alvarado did with my mother! (*Beside herself, crazy with fear, without knowing what she says.*)

DANIEL. What? What is she saying? (*Letting her go, she runs away from him and looks at him in triumph.*)

MARIANA. That, just that—what I said. You see, you won't take me now.

DANIEL. Alvarado? Who is Alvarado? Was it my father?

MARIANA (*with supreme anguish in her heart*). Yes.

DANIEL. And your mother? (*With terrible anguish.*) Is it true what I—

MARIANA. Yes.

DANIEL. Then it was for that?

MARIANA. For that.

DANIEL. For that you hated me?

MARIANA. I ought to have hated you, yes. And I love you with all my heart! What more can you ask? (*Far away from him, in anguish and weeping. A long, solemn pause.*)

DANIEL. My God, my God! Mariana! Mariana! One word, one single word! May I ask you to forgive me?

MARIANA. You poor Daniel! For what?

DANIEL. And you still love me?

MARIANA. Always!

DANIEL (*nearer to her*). And you forget everything?

MARIANA. Everything but you. I shall never forget you! (*Approaching him as if fascinated.*)

DANIEL. And, since you forget everything, you have no past—nor I. (*In a gentle, alluring voice.*) We are two beings who meet, who unite, who separate—never! (*Taking her by the waist.*) And we are going through the world alone. We see a beautiful garden; let us cross to it. Mariana! Mariana! My only joy! My life! Am I not the being that you love the most in the whole universe? Come with me! Are you not for me the whole of existence? What does the rest matter? Let me go with you.

Poor woman! Poor Mariana! Poor, sick-minded girl! To sacrifice a living, present happiness to illusions, to ghosts, to memories! Do you love me? Do I love you? Then forget all else, all the rest of the world, as though it were nothing but a ridiculous pageant. Look about you and you will see only your Daniel, and your shadow mingled with mine, and a clear moon that silvers and whitens the garden path leading to liberty, to happiness, to love, to delight, to heaven! If heaven is of any value, it was made by God just for us. Come, Mariana!

MARIANA. Daniel, I can't; I lack strength. My head whirls, my heart pounds, my body quivers! My God, My God, have pity on me! I love you, I love you dearly, Daniel! (*She is already conquered.*)

DANIEL. Poor Mariana! You are trembling with cold! It's the breeze of the dawning. When once we are in my carriage I'll wrap you up well. Look, here is your coat. (*Taking the coat she had thrown on a sofa.*) I'll help you, Mariana. (*Putting on her coat.*) Am I not helping you? My Mariana! Mariana of mine! You can see whether I love you! I am helping you as if you were a child—child of mine! (*Mariana remembers.*)

MARIANA (*screams and tears herself away from him*). My mother dressed me

like that on that night! No, leave me! Pablo! (*Rushing to her husband's door.*) Pablo! Pablo! Come! I am a vile woman!

DANIEL. What are you doing?

MARIANA. You will see now. Pablo! Help, for the sake of your honor!

DANIEL. Do you hate me then? Don't you love me?

MARIANA. You will see now if I love you. Pablo! Come! Your faithless wife calls to you! Come to me—to Mariana!

(DON PABLO *comes with a pistol in his hand. Moonlight.*)

DON PABLO. Who is screaming? What's that? Mariana! A man!

MARIANA. It's Daniel! (*Embracing him and pointing at him.*)

PABLO (*to Daniel*). You wretch!

DANIEL. You wretch, who stole from me what is mine!

MARIANA. Wretches both of us! (*She means Daniel and herself.*) Listen! I loved him! I married you out of jealousy. I was going to run away with him. Do you understand? If you leave me I shall fly with him. Let me see what you will do. What are you going to do, Pablo? I love him! What are you going to do? (*Still embracing Daniel as if to challenge Don Pablo.*)

PABLO. What you wanted me to! (*He shoots Mariana, who falls dead.*)

DANIEL. Mariana! (*Kneeling beside her.*) Mariana! Mariana! My soul! Answer me, Mariana!

PABLO. I am waiting for you.

DANIEL. It's true. (*Rising, fiercely.*) I have still this man to deal with.

PABLO. Have you any arms?

DANIEL (*taking out revolver*). Yes.

PABLO (*pointing to the garden*). Let's go out there.

DANIEL. Out!

PABLO. Your life or mine!

DANIEL (*pointing to Mariana's body*). There was only one worth the cost, and that is ended. Ours? What do they matter? Good-by, Mariana—no, not good-by; I am coming after! (*They go toward the garden.*)

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